

JNANESHWAR

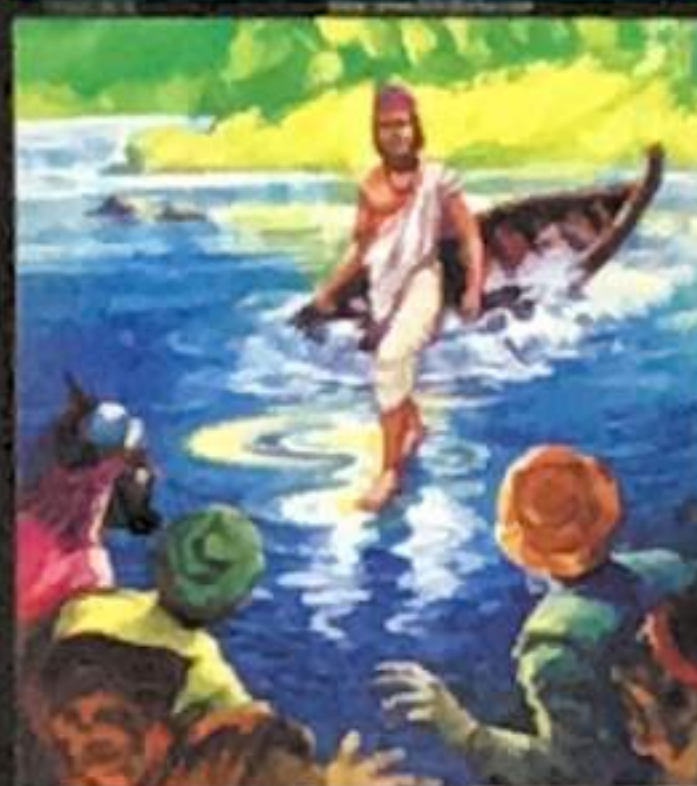
It was predicted by a sage that the children of Vithal and Rukmini would be great spiritual leaders. But of their four children it was little Jnanadev who seemed to have a special inclination for the scriptures. In his brief life as a preacher Jnaneshwar, as he was called later, spread the message of Bhagwat Dharma or love of God and brotherhood of man. He was the founder of the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra. Jnaneshwar renounced the world at the age of twenty-one.

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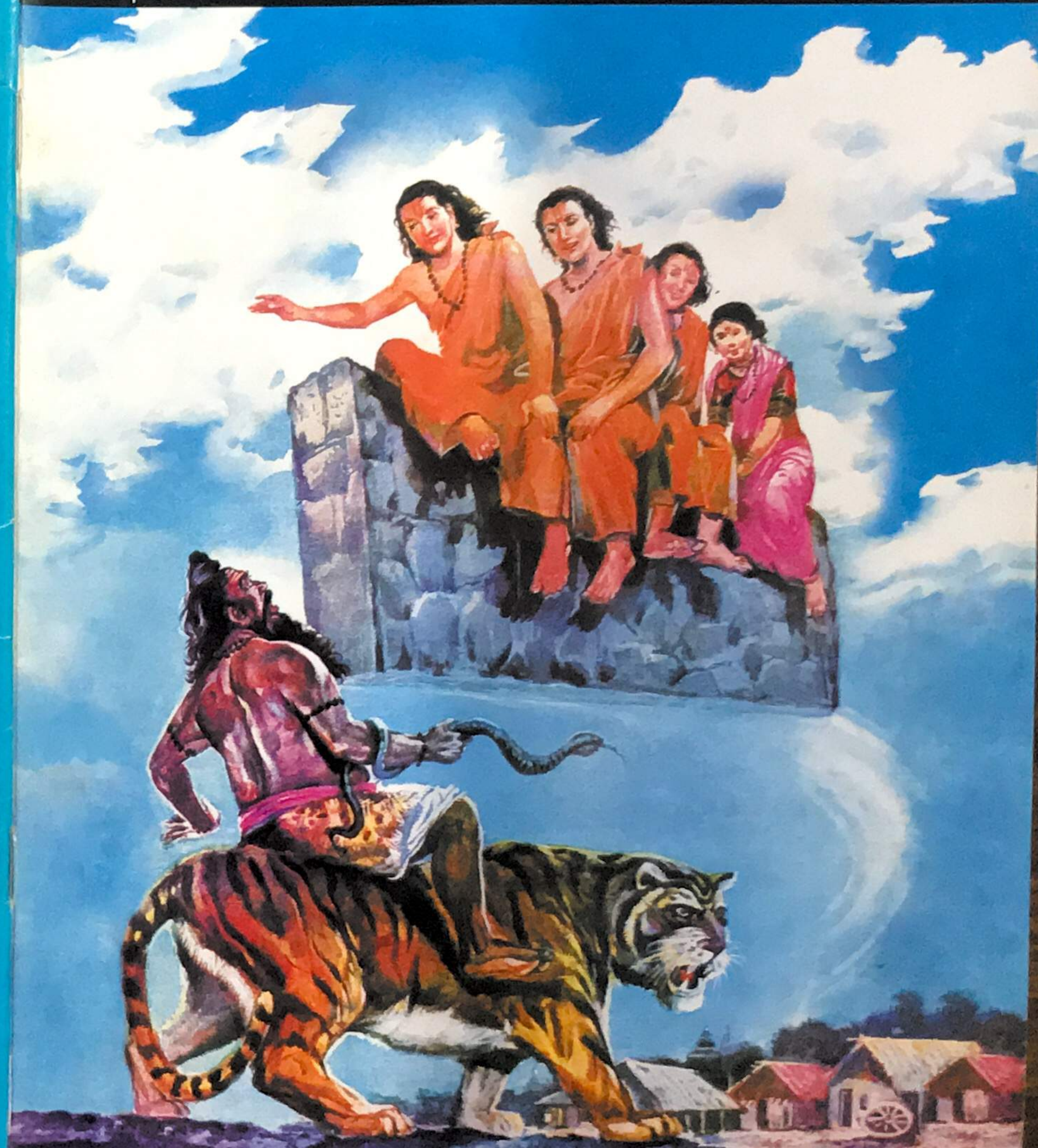
VISIONARIES



JNANESHWAR

FOUNDER OF THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT IN MAHARASHTRA

Vol 723 | ₹50



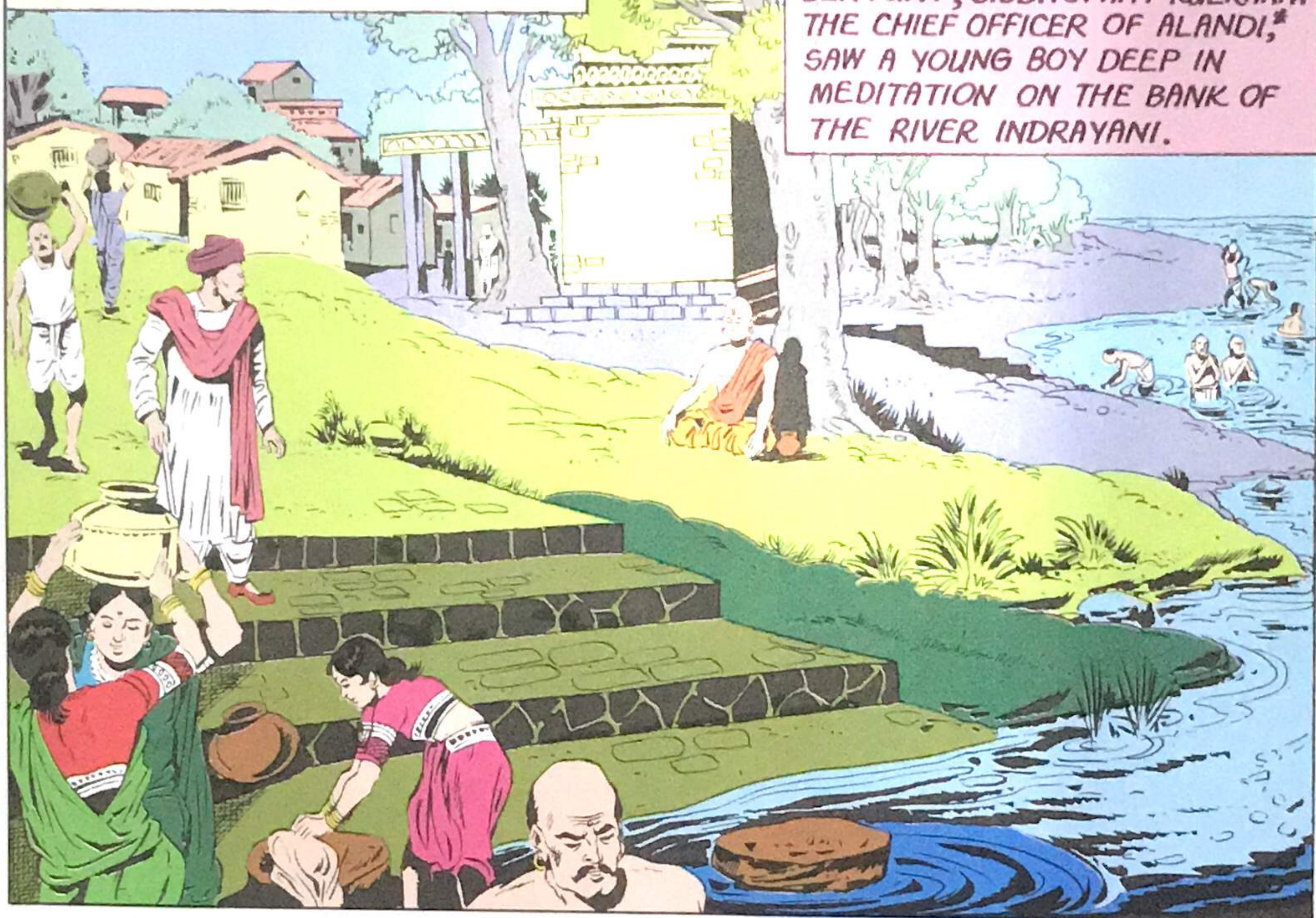
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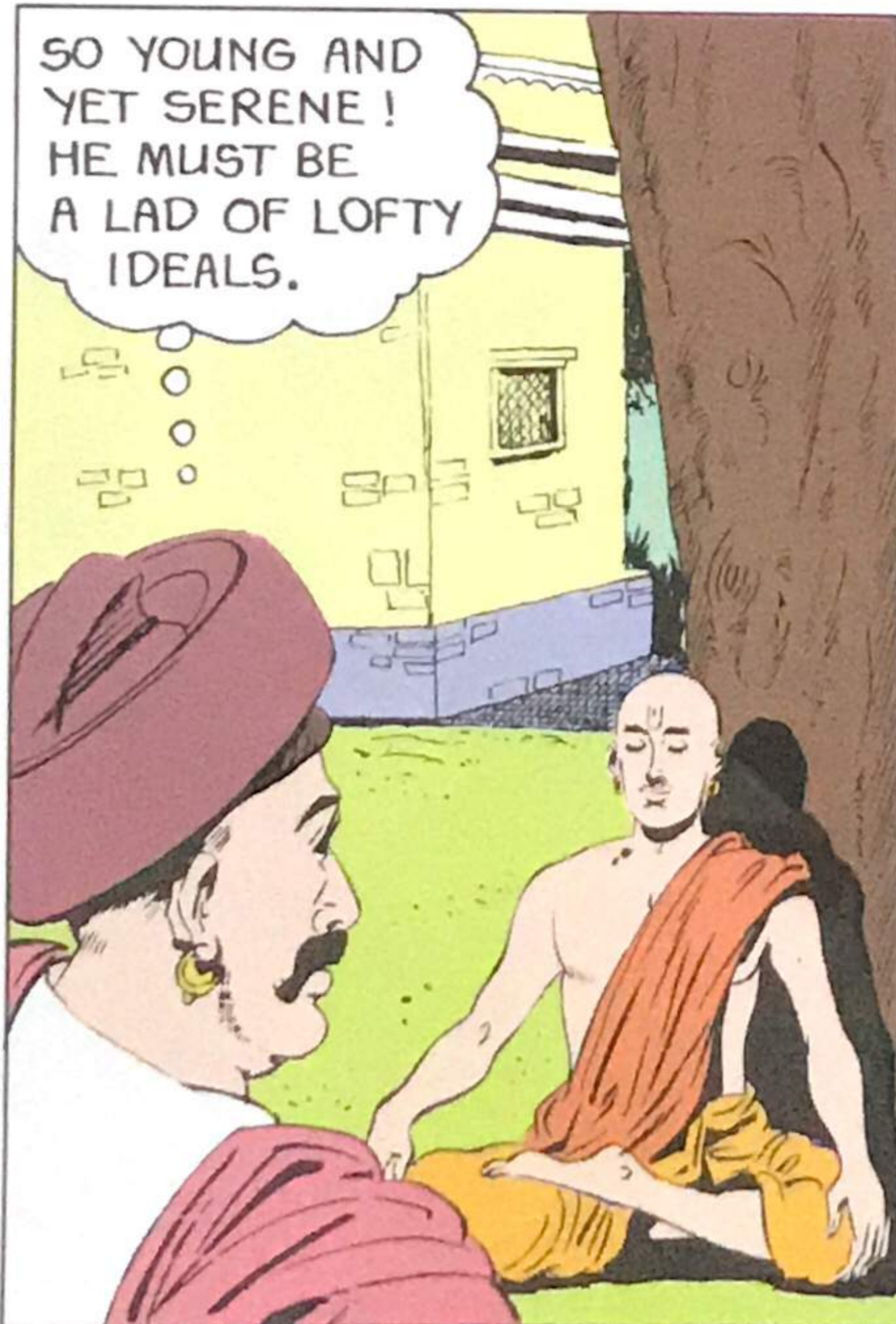
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JNANESHWAR

ONE MORNING, TOWARDS THE END OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, SIDDHOPANT KULKARNI THE CHIEF OFFICER OF ALANDI,* SAW A YOUNG BOY DEEP IN MEDITATION ON THE BANK OF THE RIVER INDRAYANI.



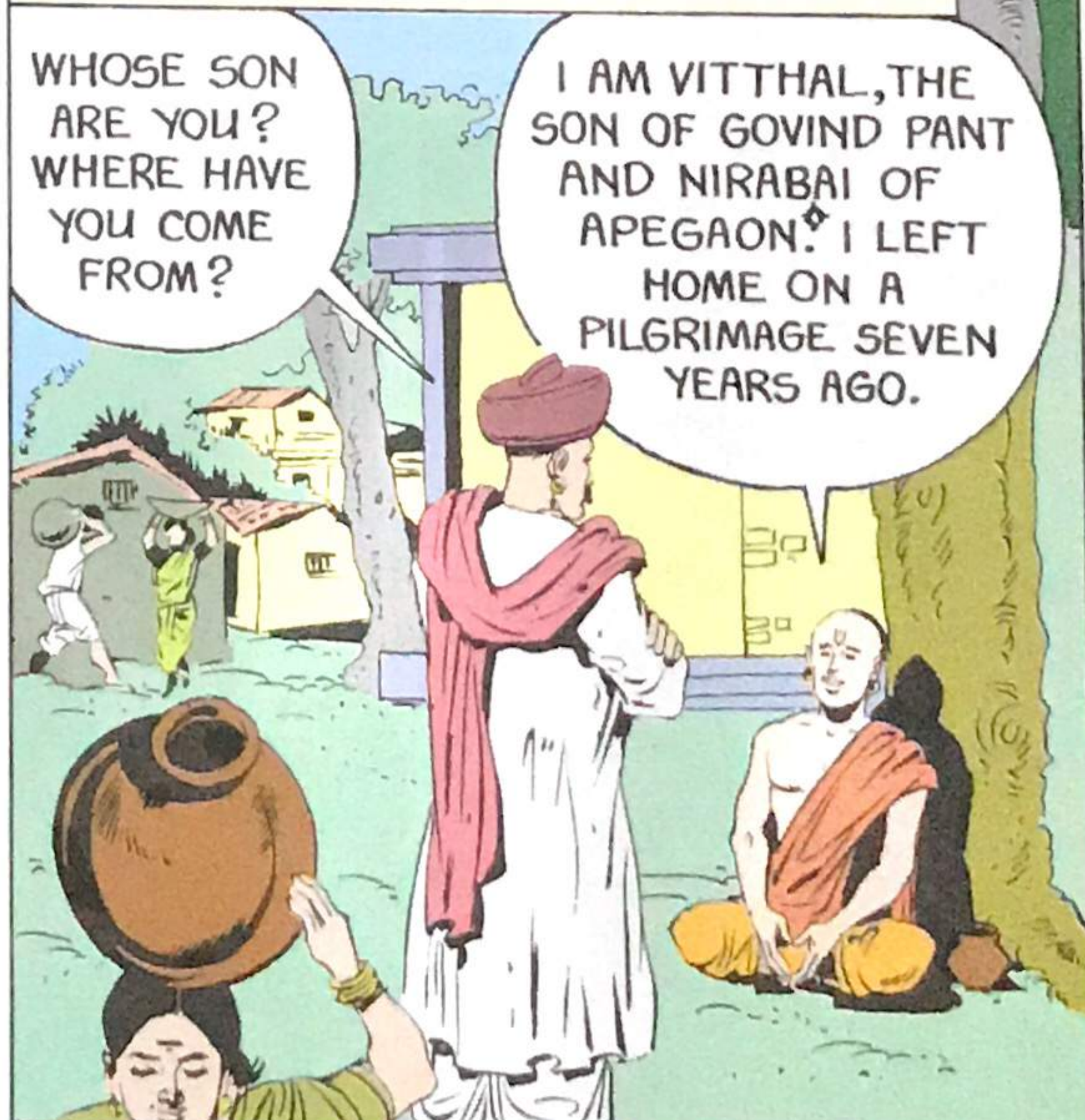
SO YOUNG AND YET SERENE ! HE MUST BE A LAD OF LOFTY IDEALS.



SIDDHOPANT WAITED THERE PATIENTLY TILL THE BOY OPENED HIS EYES.

WHOSE SON ARE YOU ? WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM ?

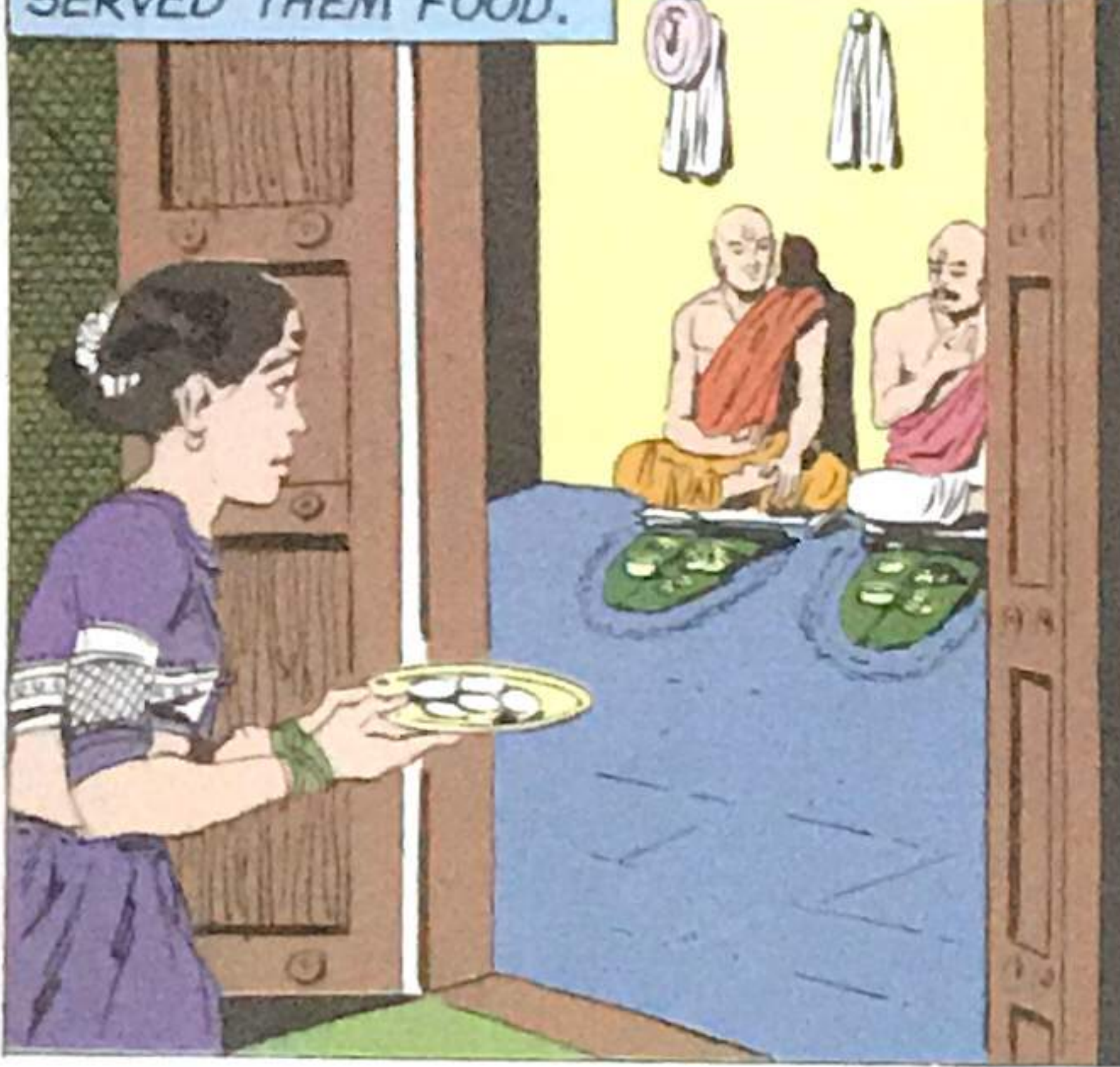
I AM VITTHAL, THE SON OF GOVIND PANT AND NIRABAI OF APEGAON.† I LEFT HOME ON A PILGRIMAGE SEVEN YEARS AGO.



* A VILLAGE NEAR PUNE IN MAHARASHTRA STATE

† A VILLAGE NEAR PAITHAN

SIDDHOPANT TOOK YOUNG VITTHAL HOME. HIS PRETTY DAUGHTER, RUKMINI, SERVED THEM FOOD.



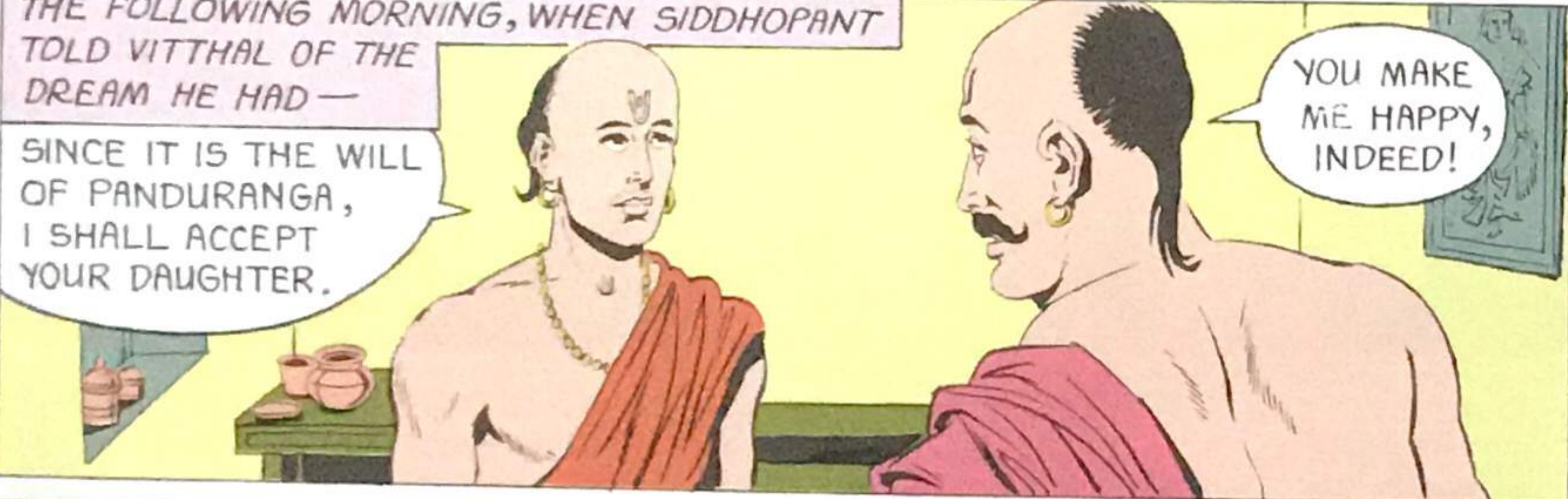
THAT NIGHT, PANDURANGA* APPEARED TO SIDDHOPANT IN A DREAM.



GIVE RUKMINI TO VITTHAL. THEIR CHILDREN WILL BE GREAT SPIRITUAL TEACHERS.

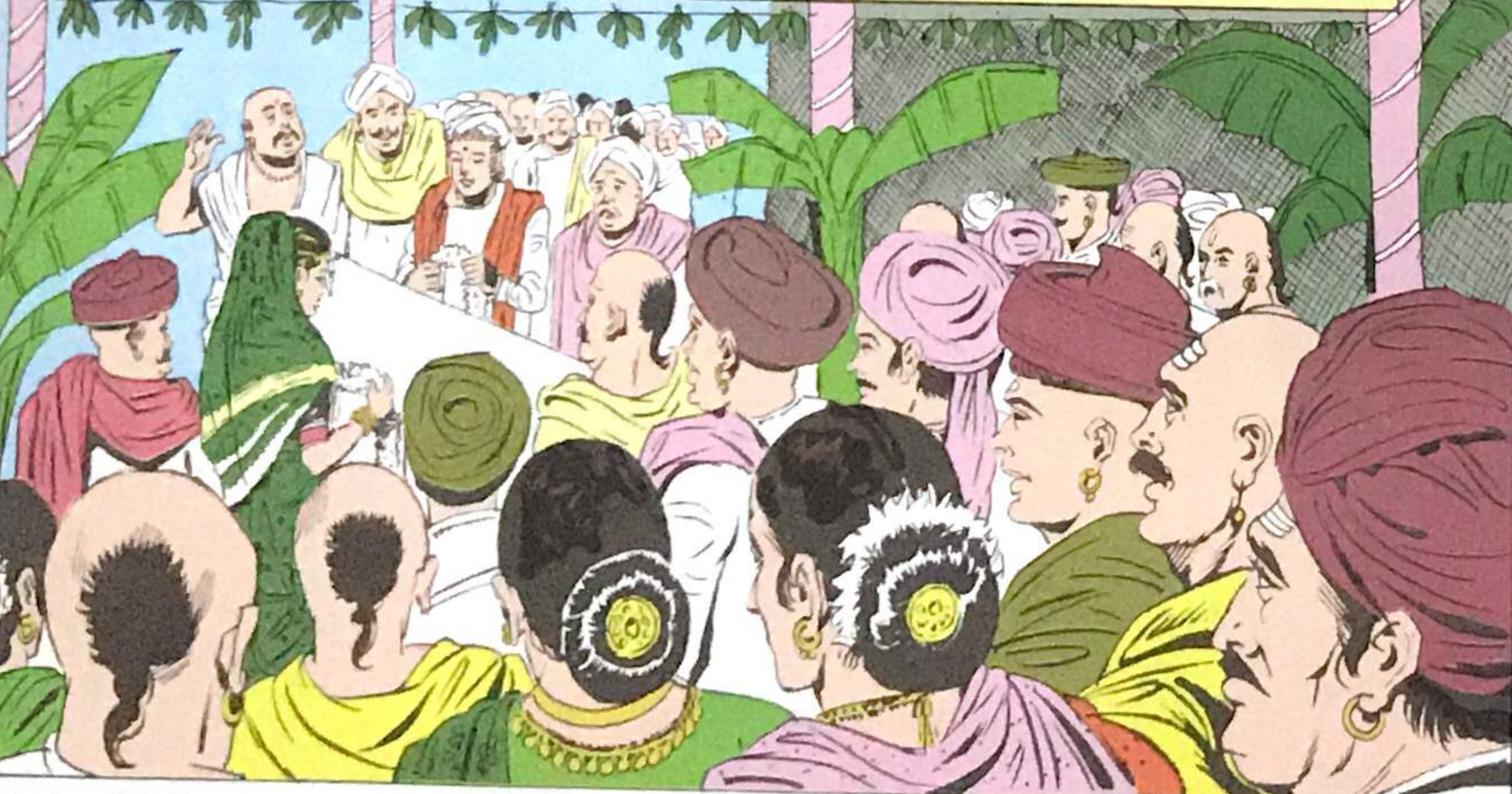
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, WHEN SIDDHOPANT TOLD VITTHAL OF THE DREAM HE HAD —

SINCE IT IS THE WILL OF PANDURANGA, I SHALL ACCEPT YOUR DAUGHTER.



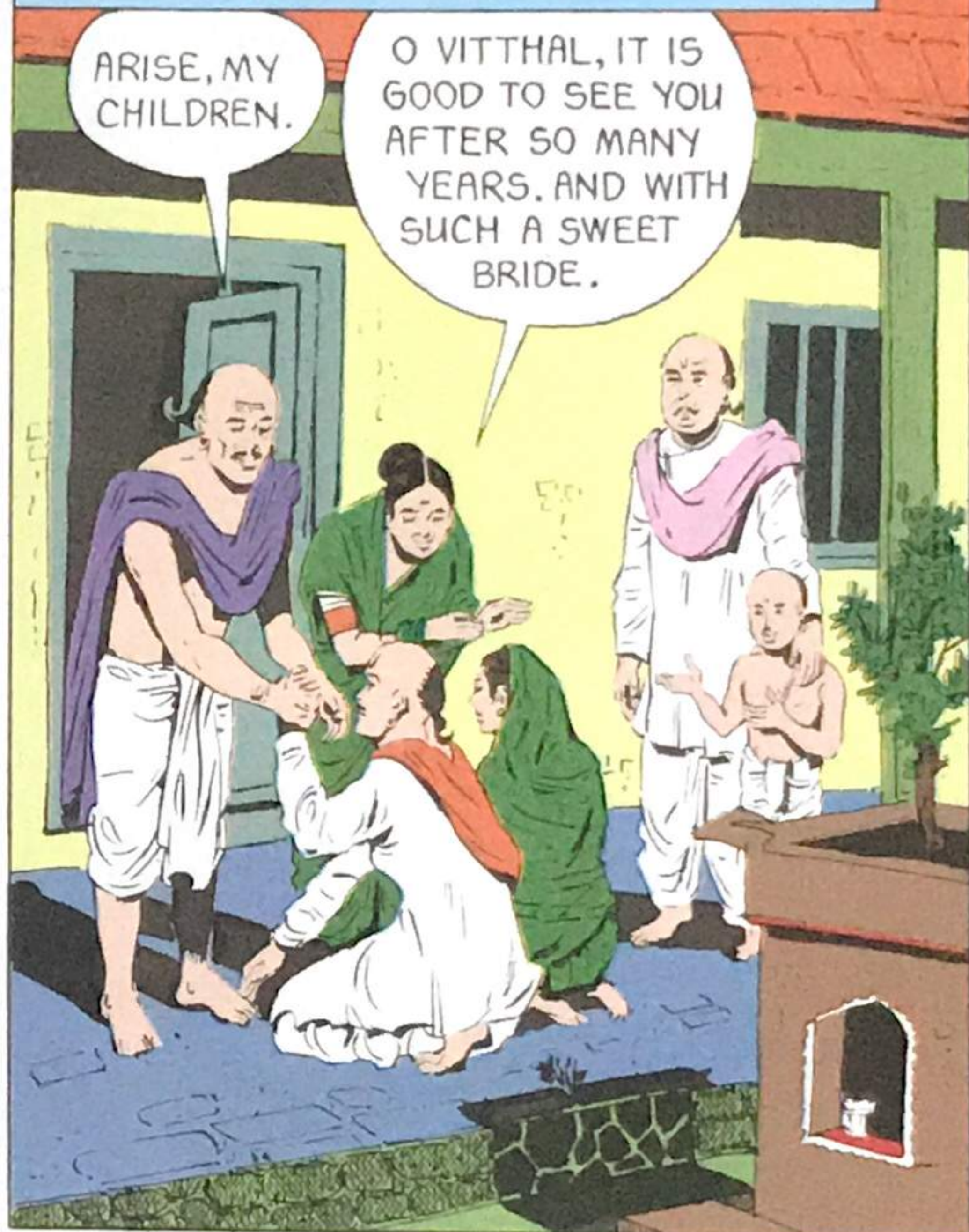
YOU MAKE ME HAPPY, INDEED!

THE MARRIAGE OF VITTHAL AND RUKMINI WAS CELEBRATED WITH GREAT POMP.



* ANOTHER NAME OF LORD VISHNU

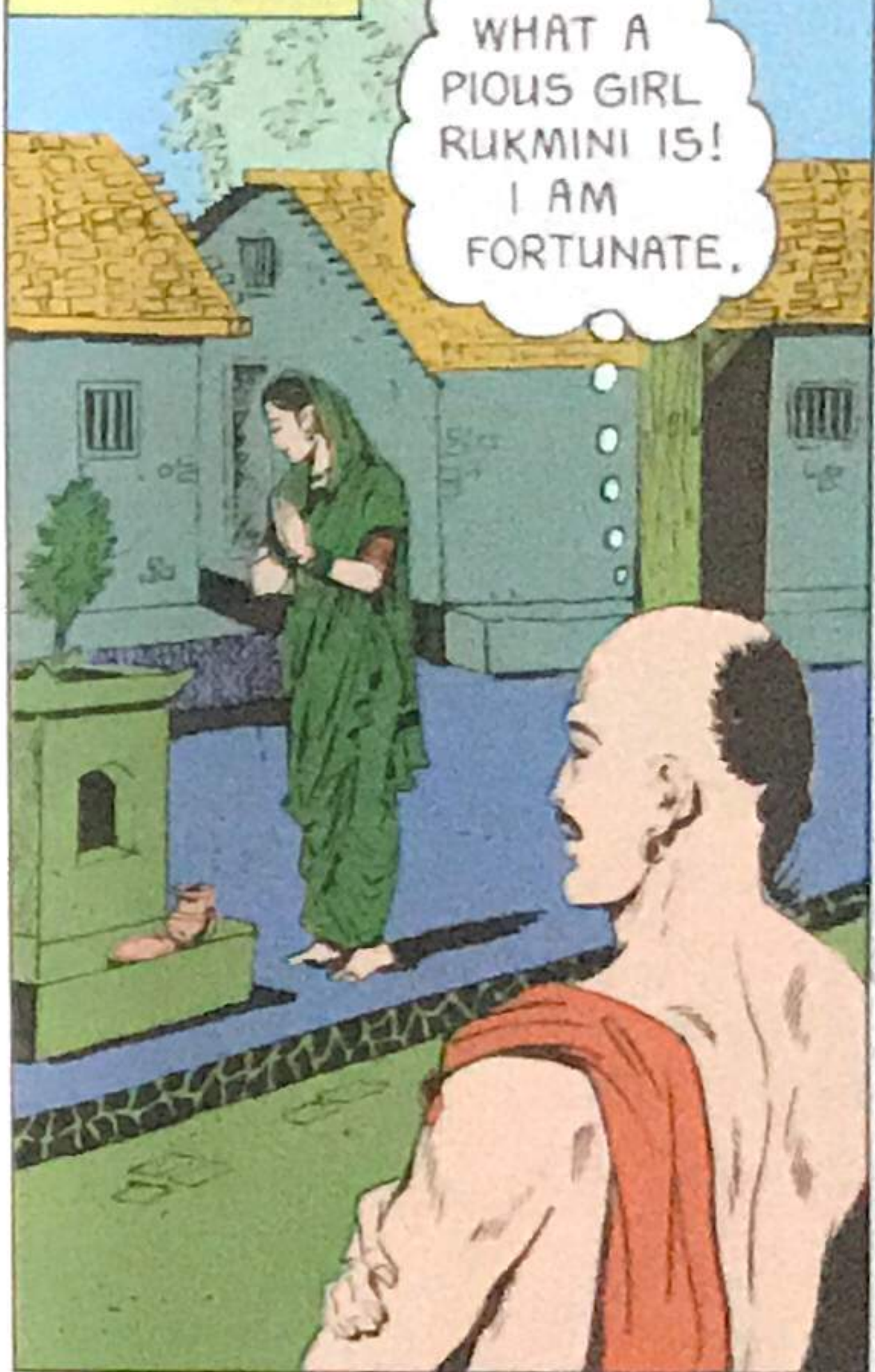
WHEN VITTHAL TOOK HIS BRIDE HOME, HIS PARENTS WERE OVERJOYED.



ARISE, MY CHILDREN.

O VITTHAL, IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AFTER SO MANY YEARS. AND WITH SUCH A SWEET BRIDE.

FOR SOME YEARS VITTHAL LED A HAPPY LIFE.

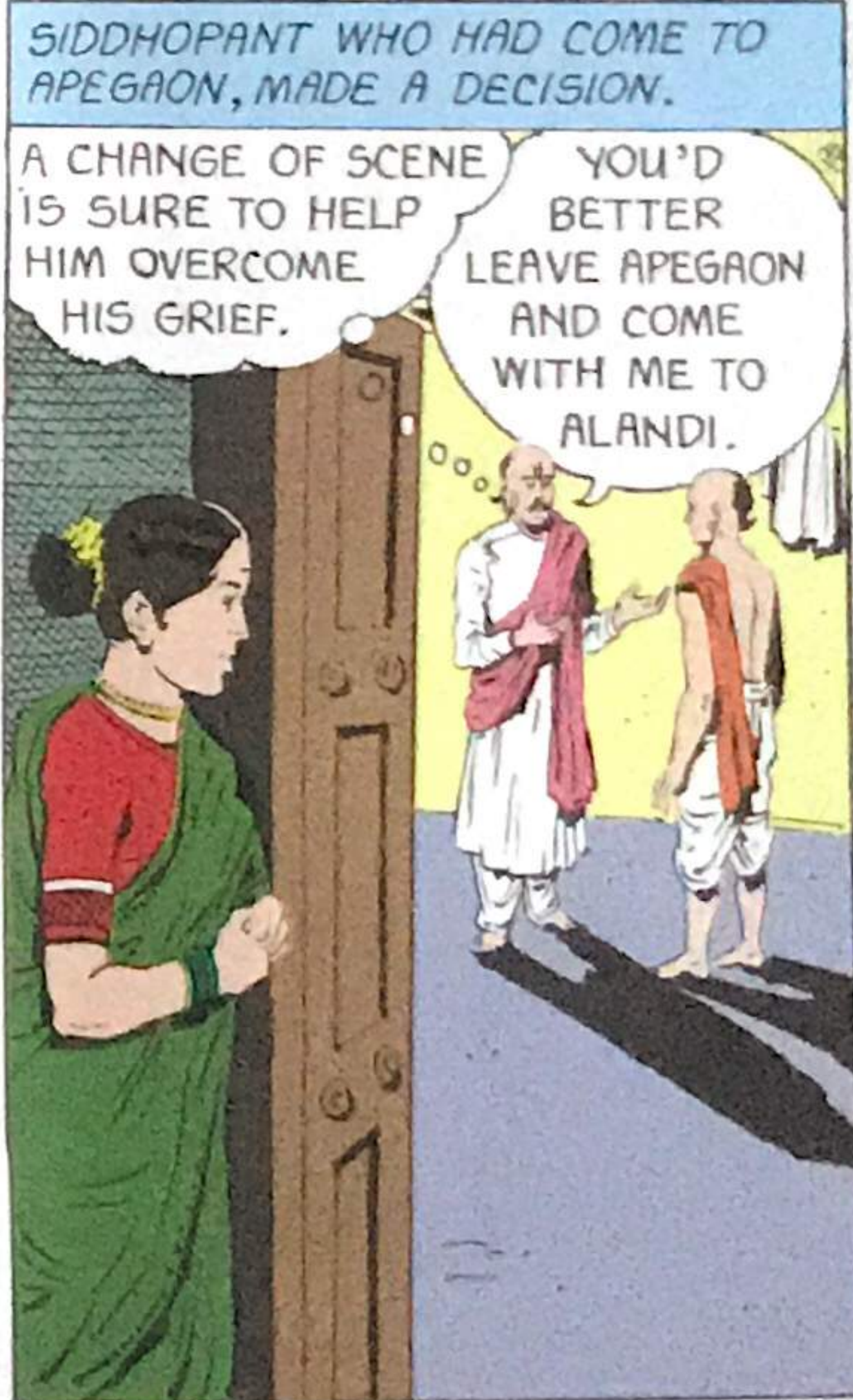


WHAT A PIOUS GIRL RUKMINI IS! I AM FORTUNATE.

SIDDHOPANT WHO HAD COME TO APEGAON, MADE A DECISION.

A CHANGE OF SCENE IS SURE TO HELP HIM OVERCOME HIS GRIEF.

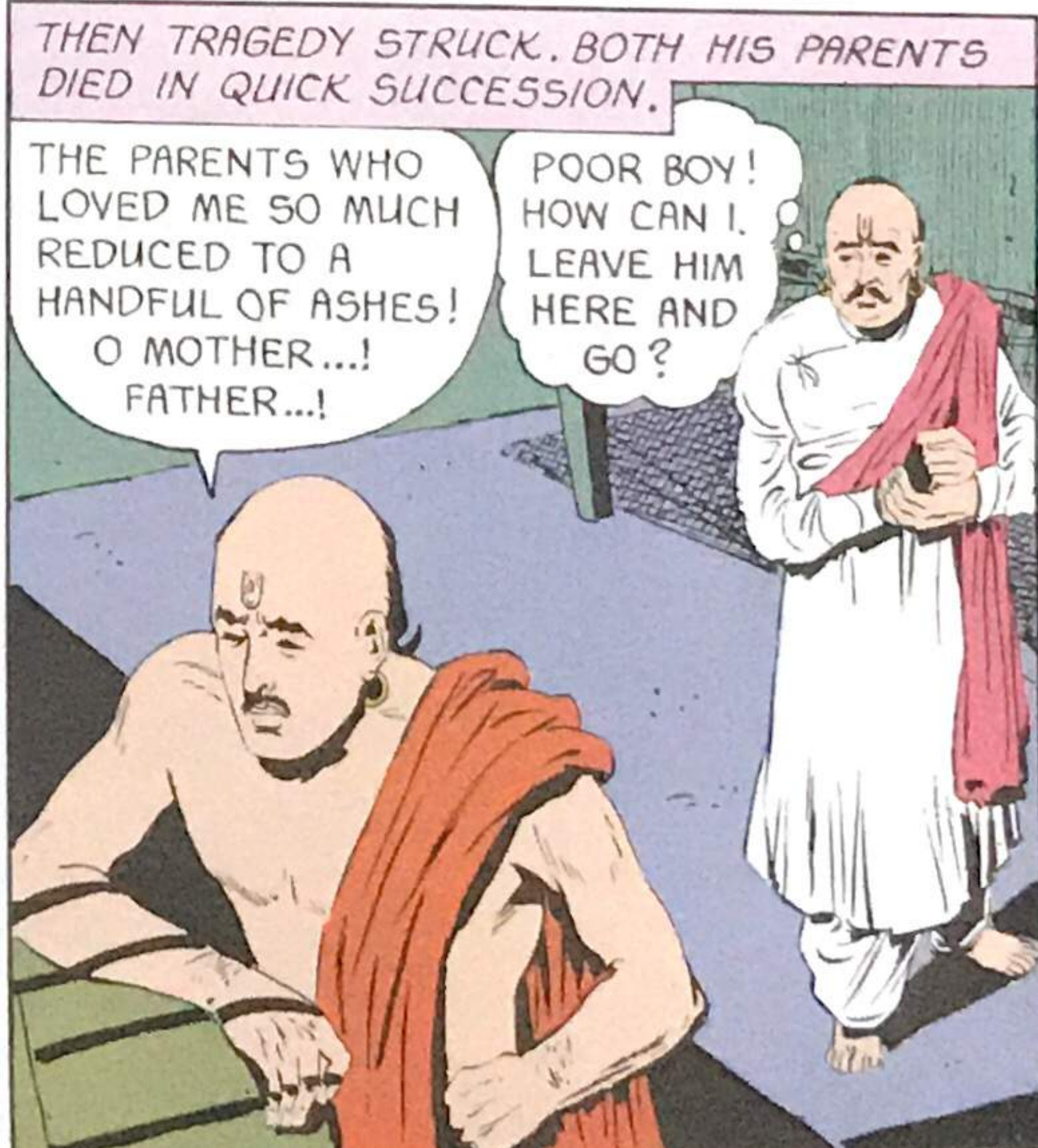
YOU'D BETTER LEAVE APEGAON AND COME WITH ME TO ALANDI.

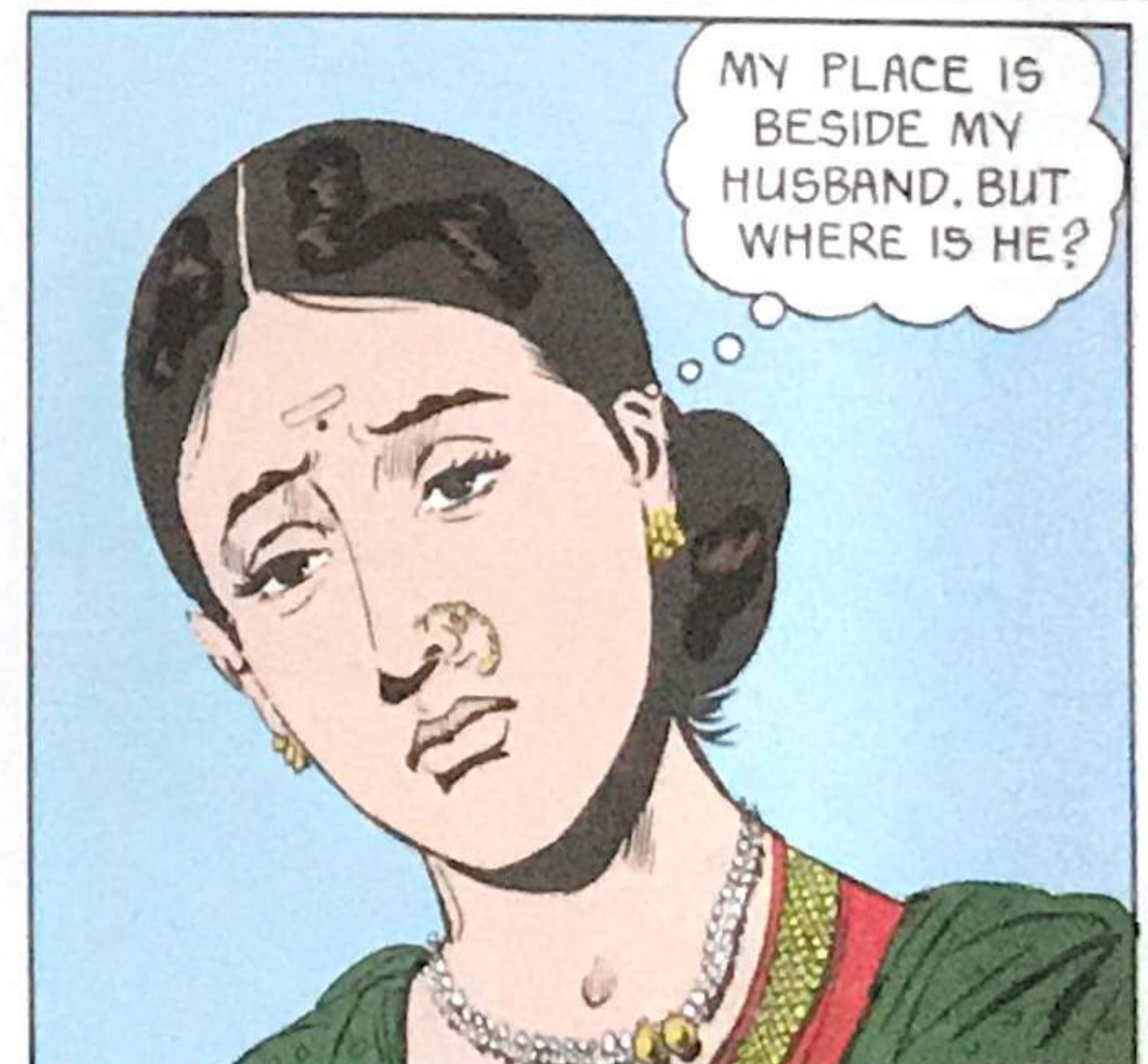
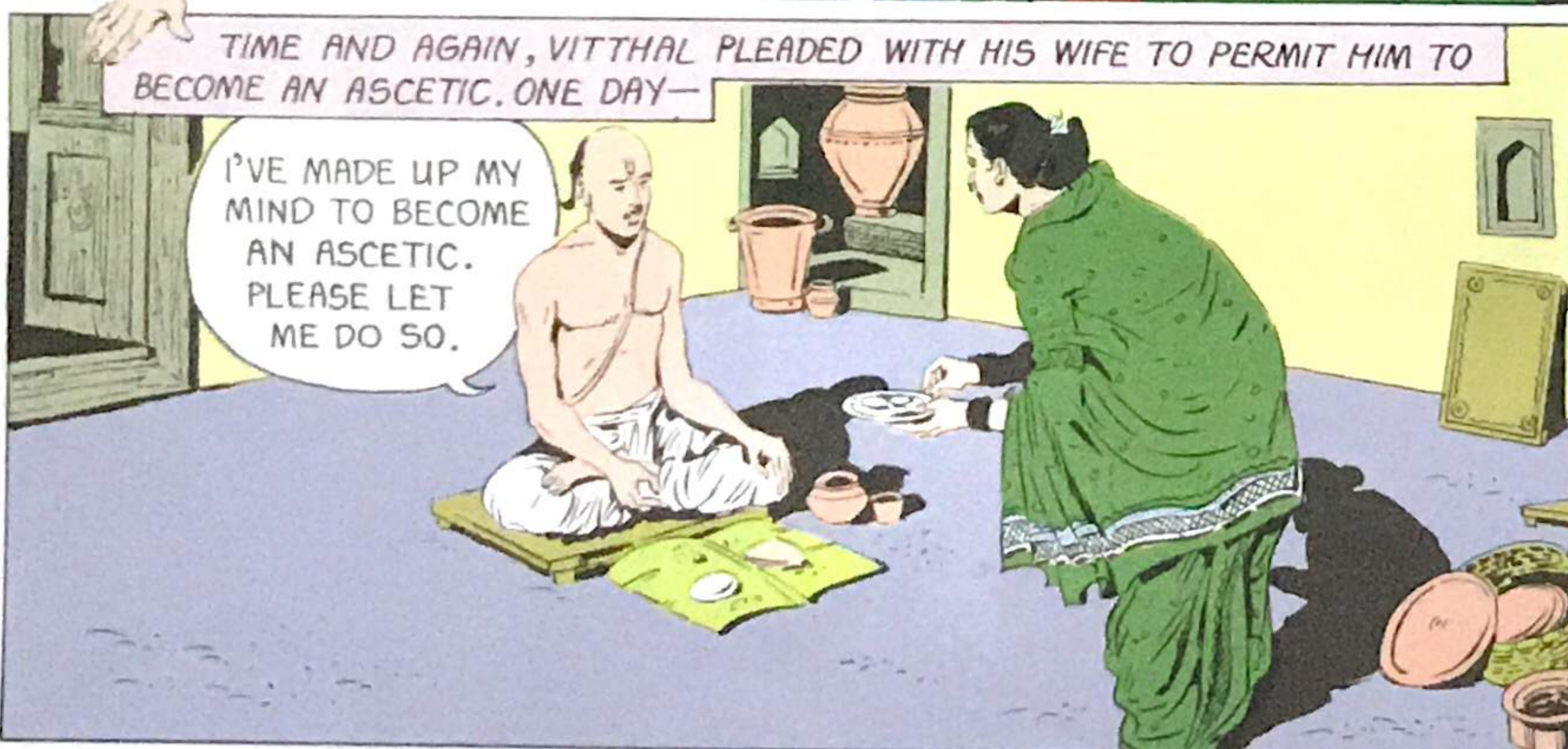
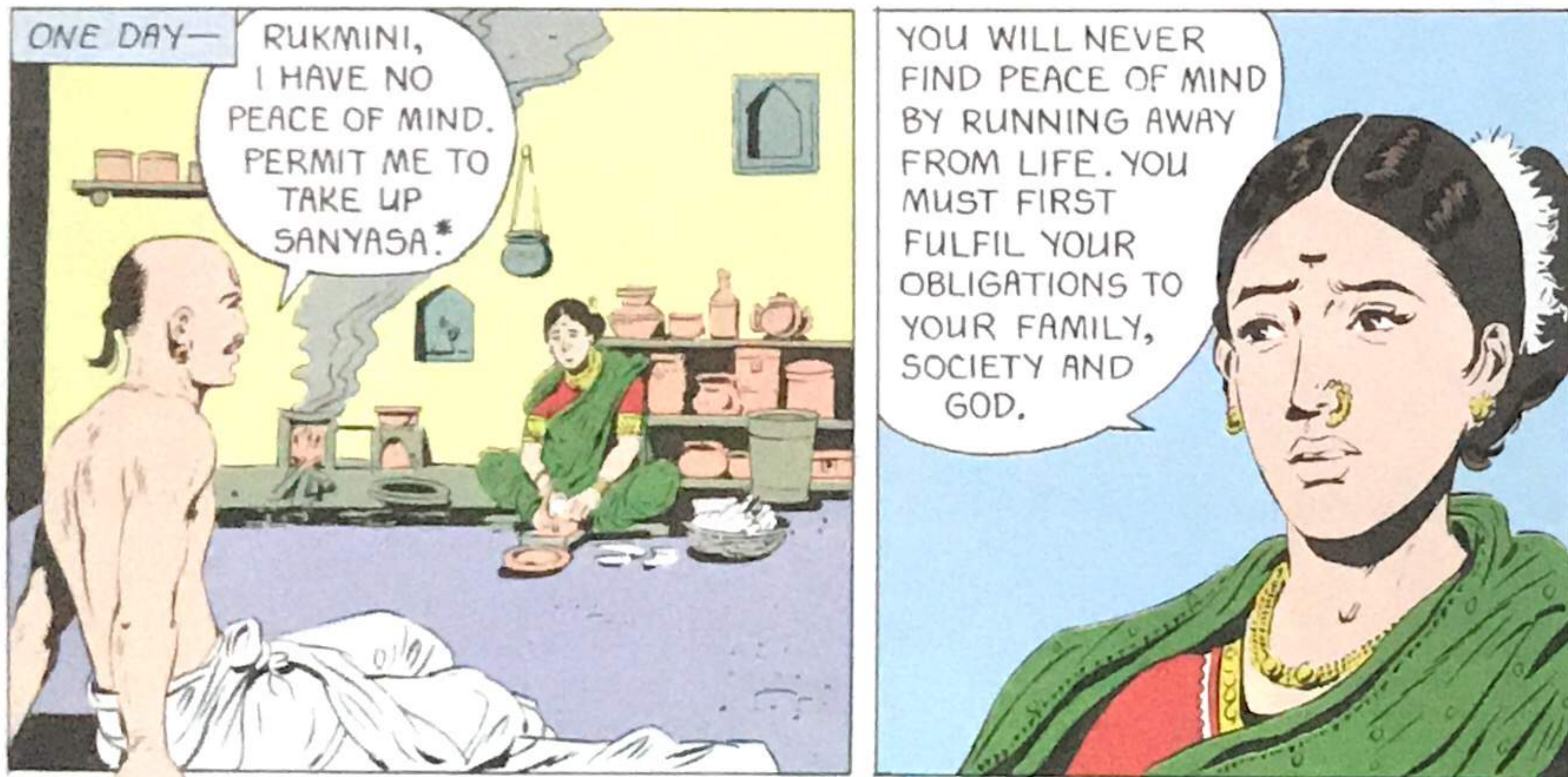


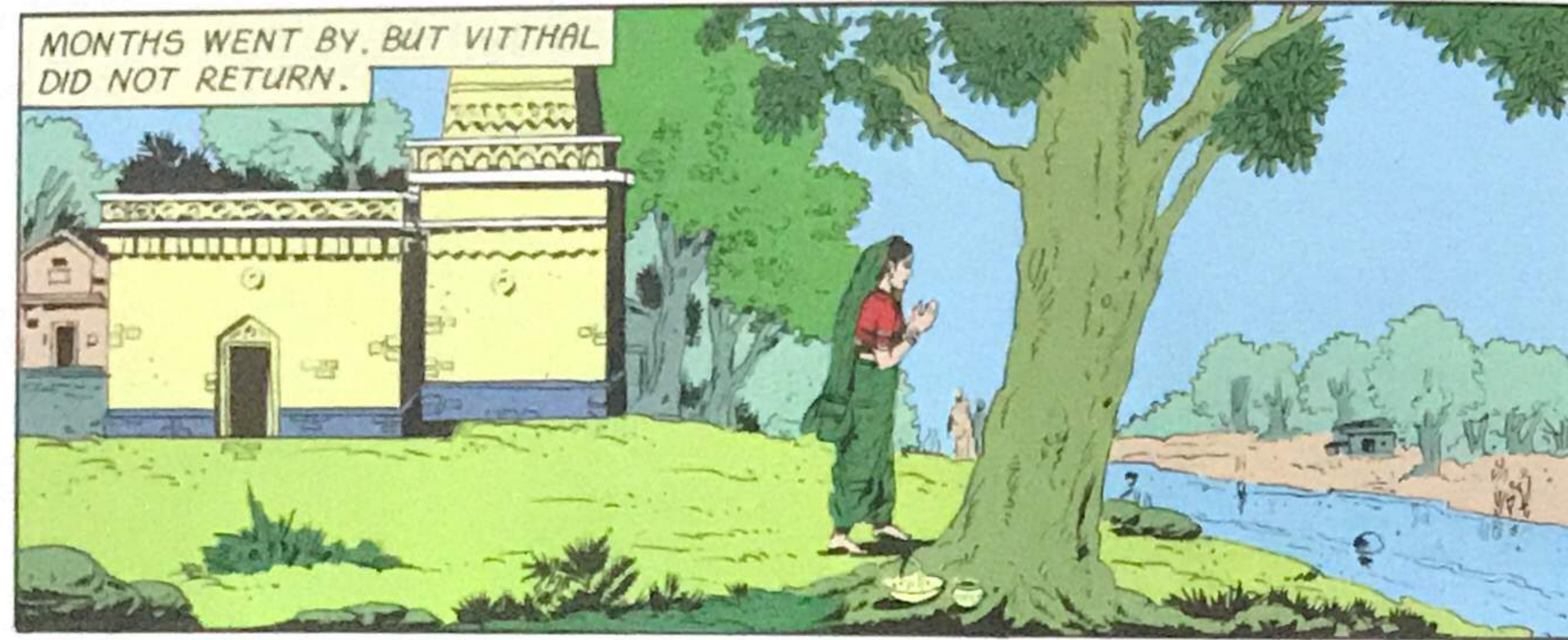
THEN TRAGEDY STRUCK. BOTH HIS PARENTS DIED IN QUICK SUCCESSION.

THE PARENTS WHO LOVED ME SO MUCH REDUCED TO A HANDFUL OF ASHES! O MOTHER...! FATHER...!

POOR BOY! HOW CAN I, LEAVE HIM HERE AND GO?







MONTHS WENT BY, BUT VITTHAL DID NOT RETURN.



ONE DAY, SWAMI RAMANANDA OF KASHI* CAME TO ALANDI. RUKMINI WENT TO MAKE OBEISANCE TO HIM.

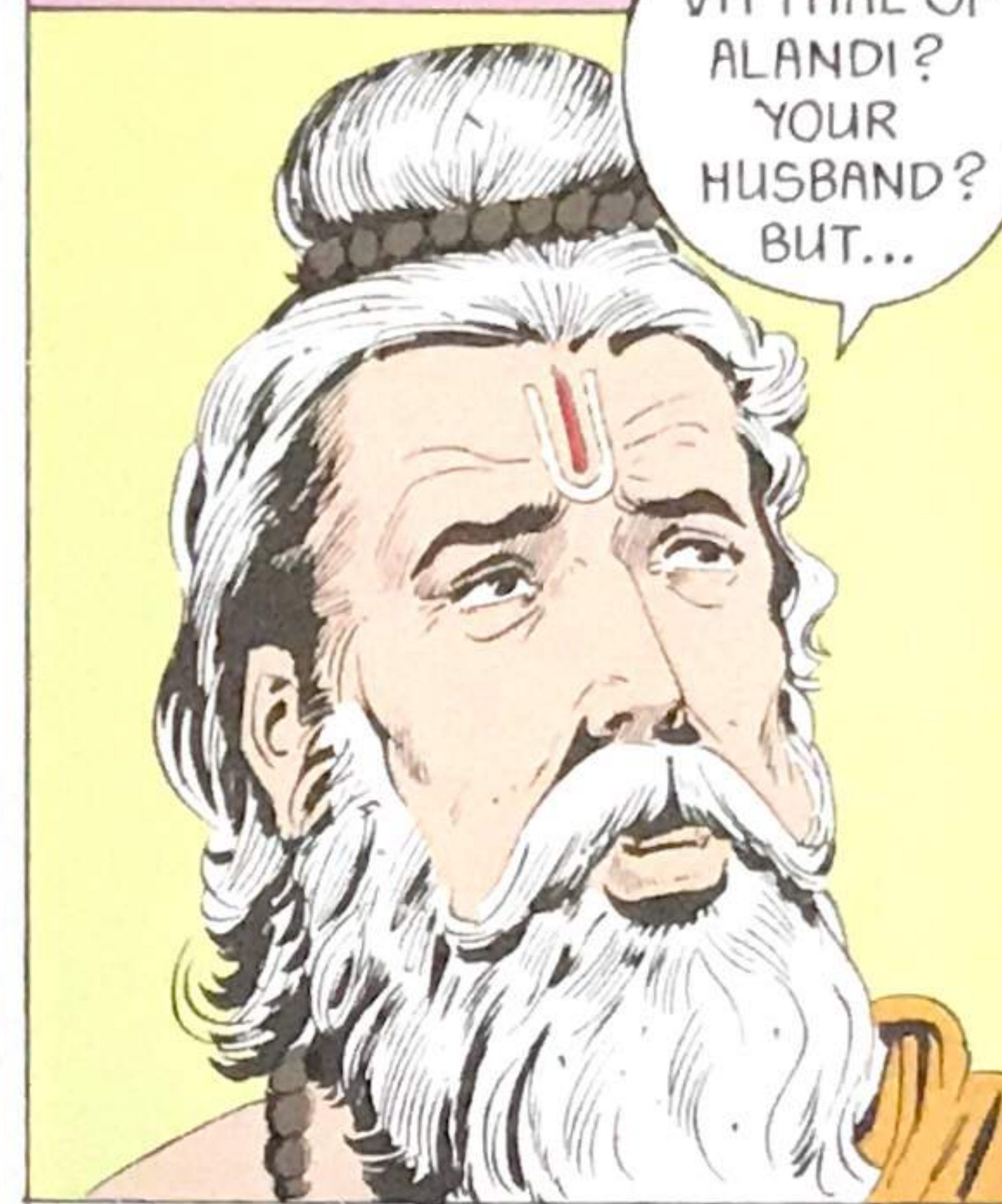
ARISE, DAUGHTER. MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH MANY CHILDREN WHO WILL GUIDE MANKIND.



WHY CHILD! WHAT'S THE MATTER?

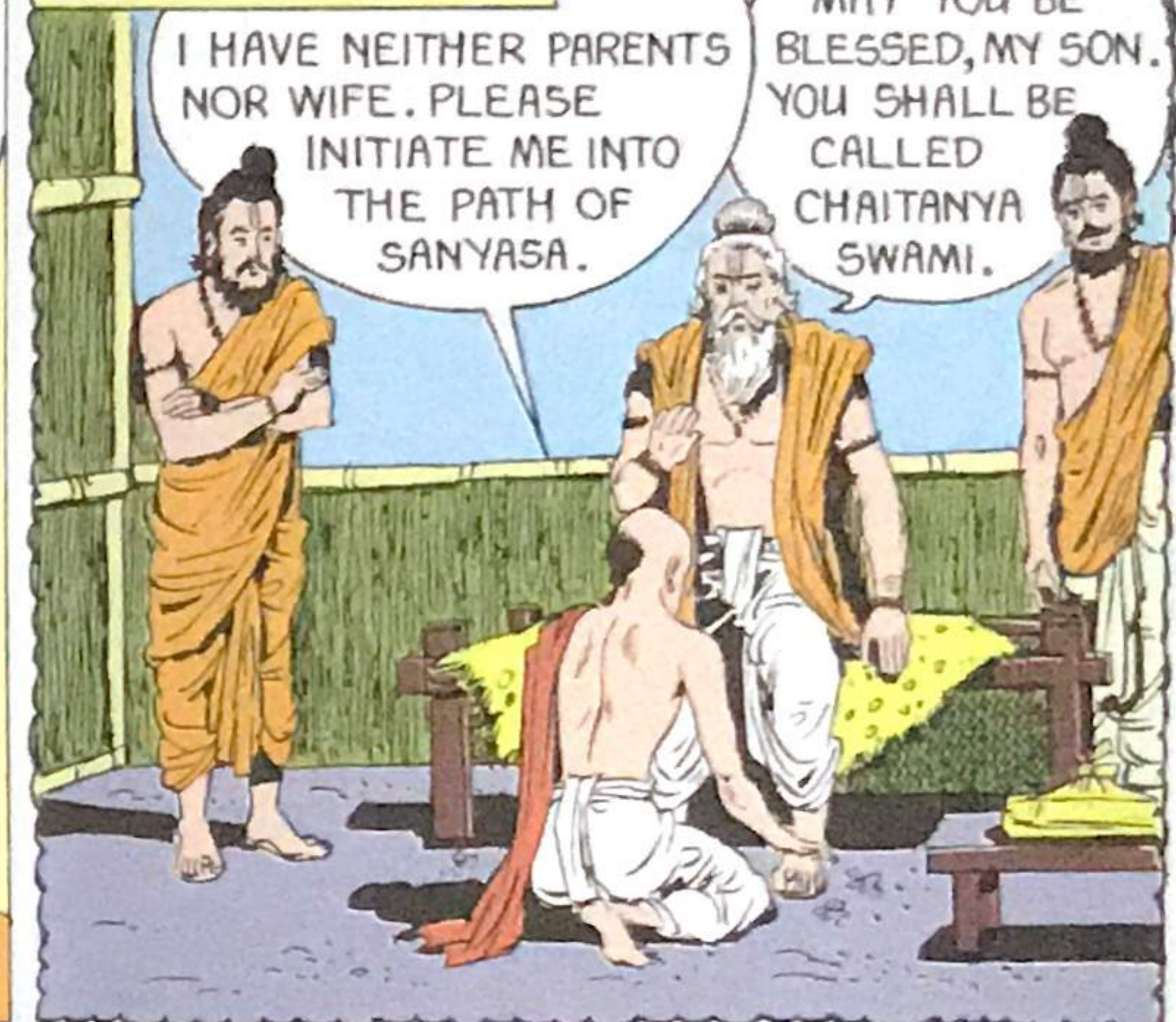
MY HUSBAND HAS DESERTED ME.

SHE TOLD SWAMI RAMANANDA ALL ABOUT VITTHAL.



VITTHAL OF ALANDI? YOUR HUSBAND? BUT...

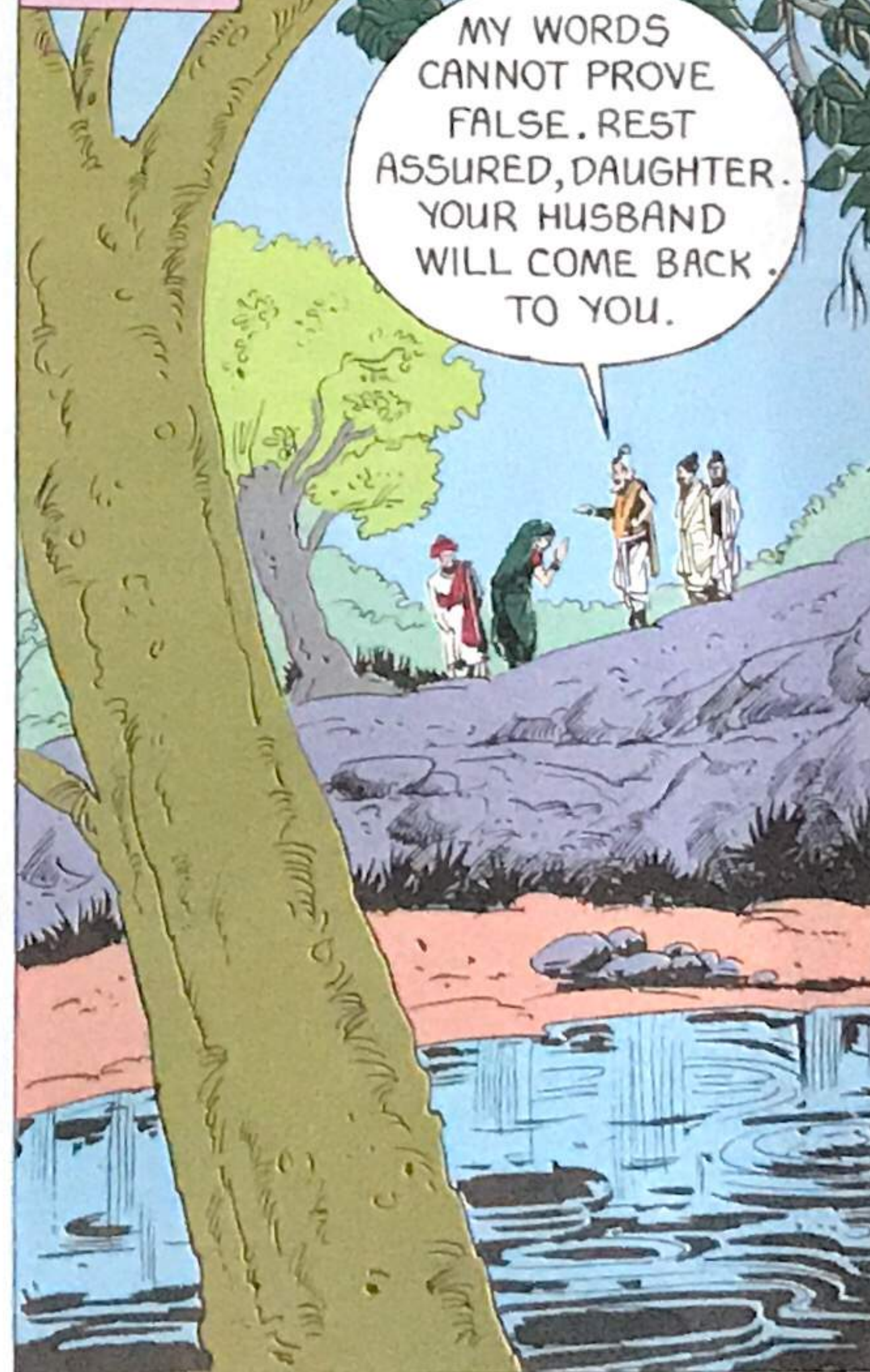
RAMANANDA REMEMBERED HIS FIRST MEETING WITH VITTHAL PANT.



I HAVE NEITHER PARENTS NOR WIFE. PLEASE INITIATE ME INTO THE PATH OF SANYASA.

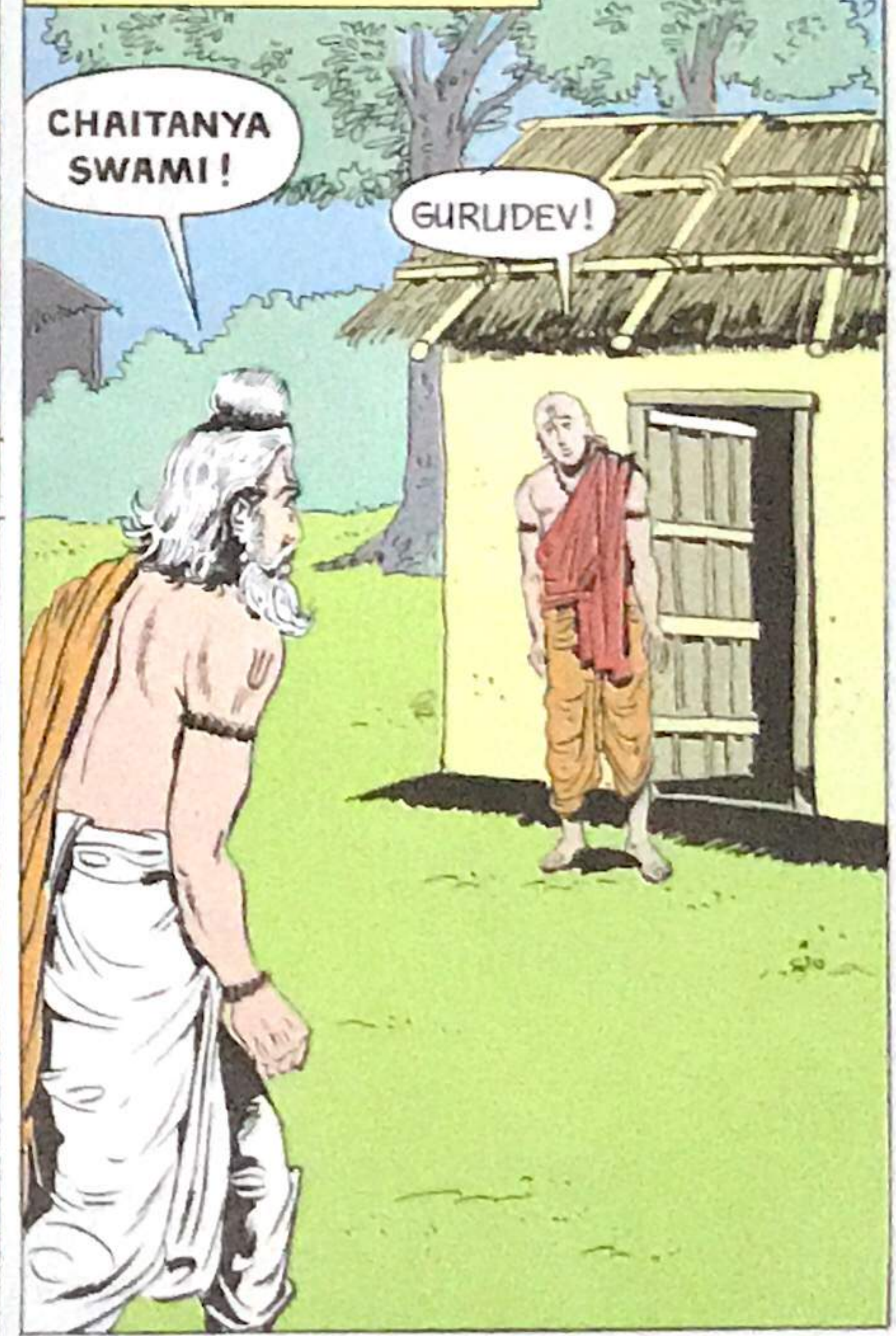
MAY YOU BE BLESSED, MY SON. YOU SHALL BE CALLED CHAITANYA SWAMI.

RAMANANDA TURNED TO RUKMINI.



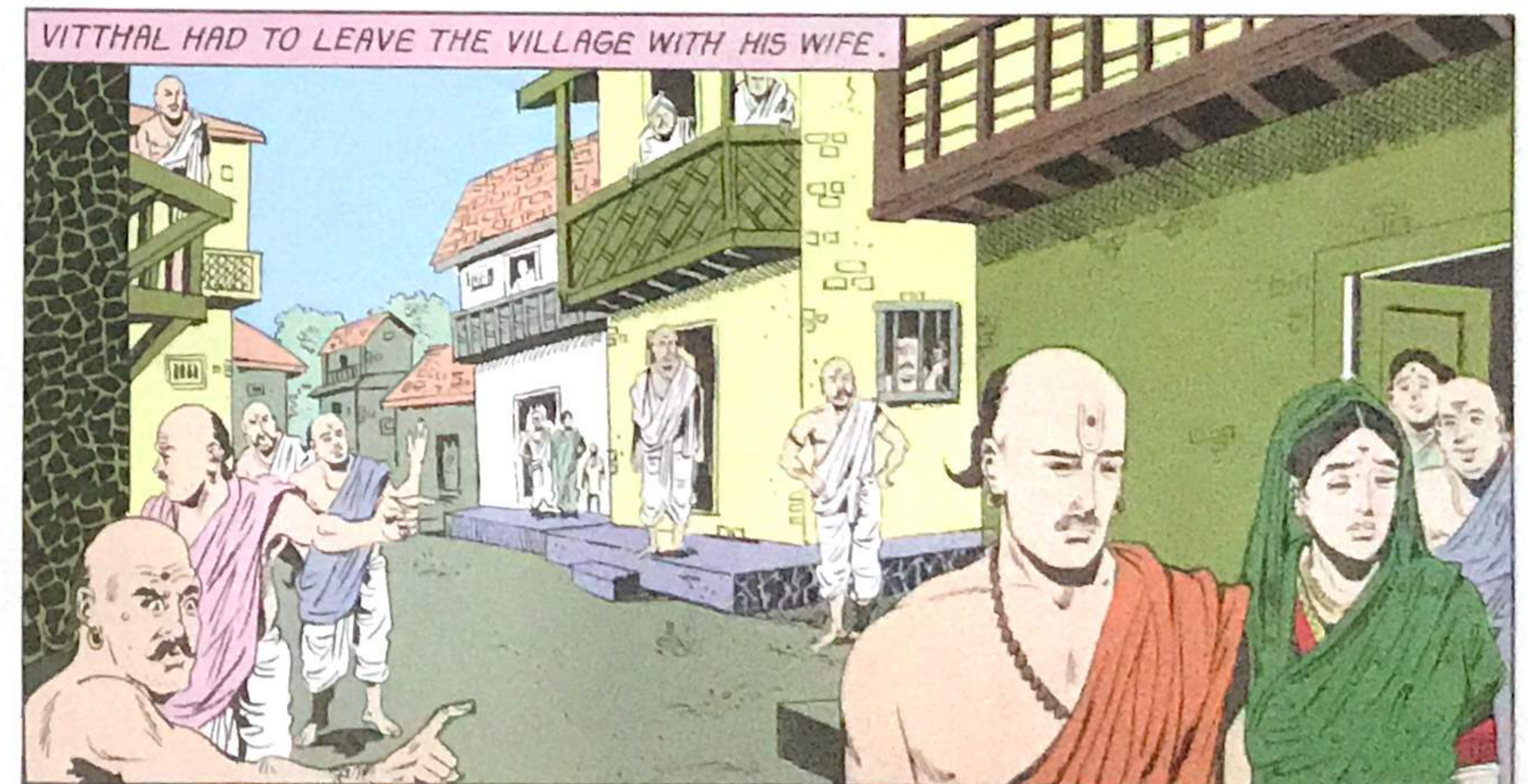
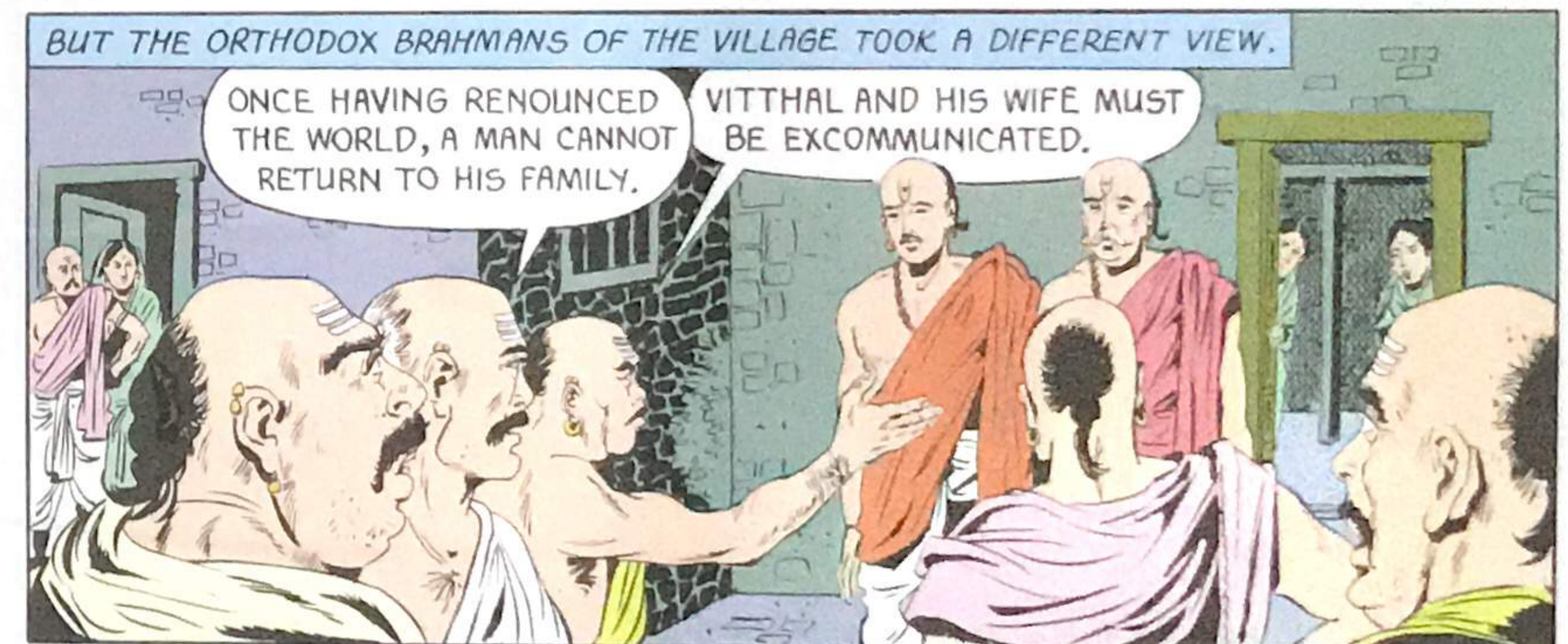
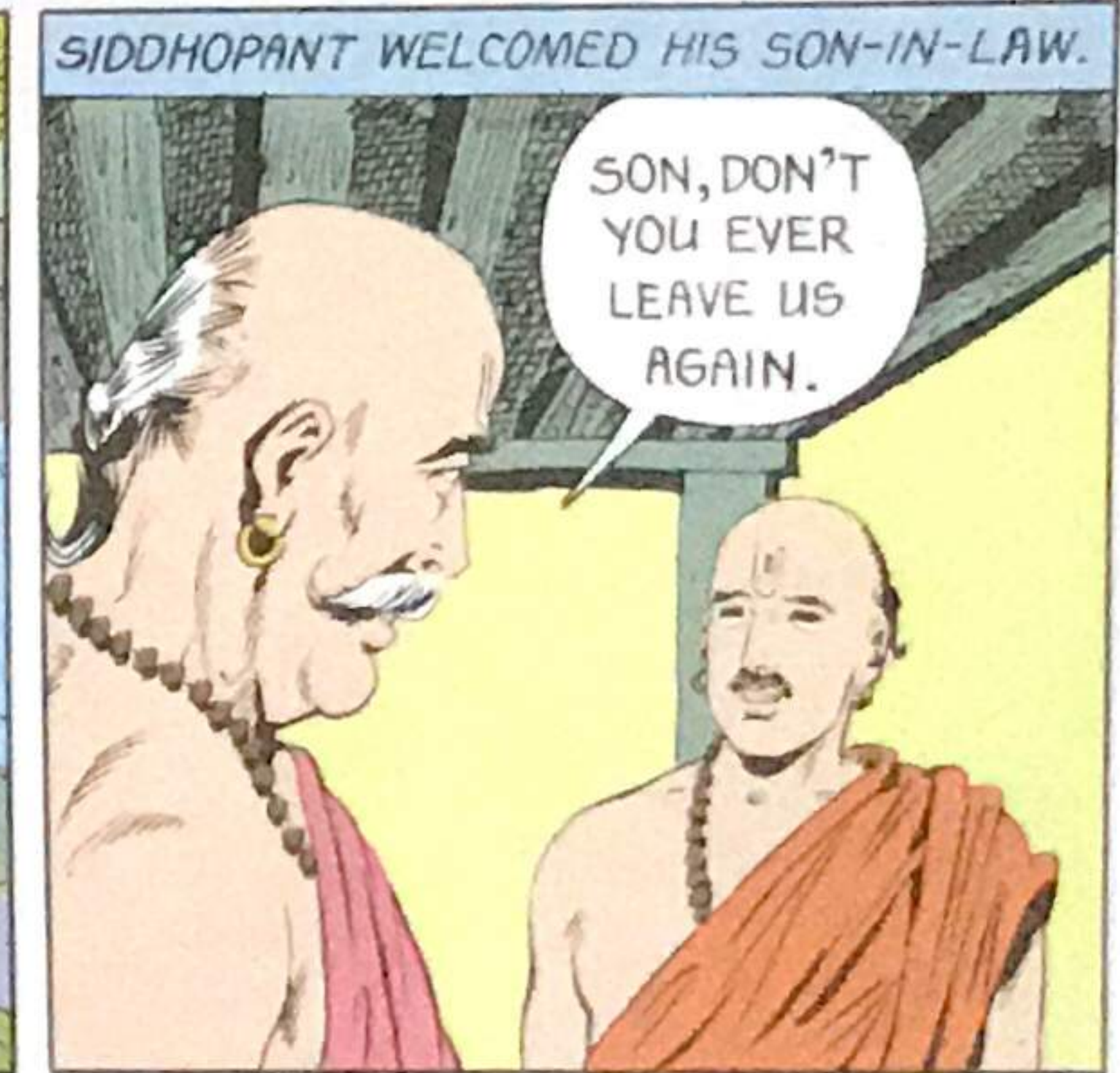
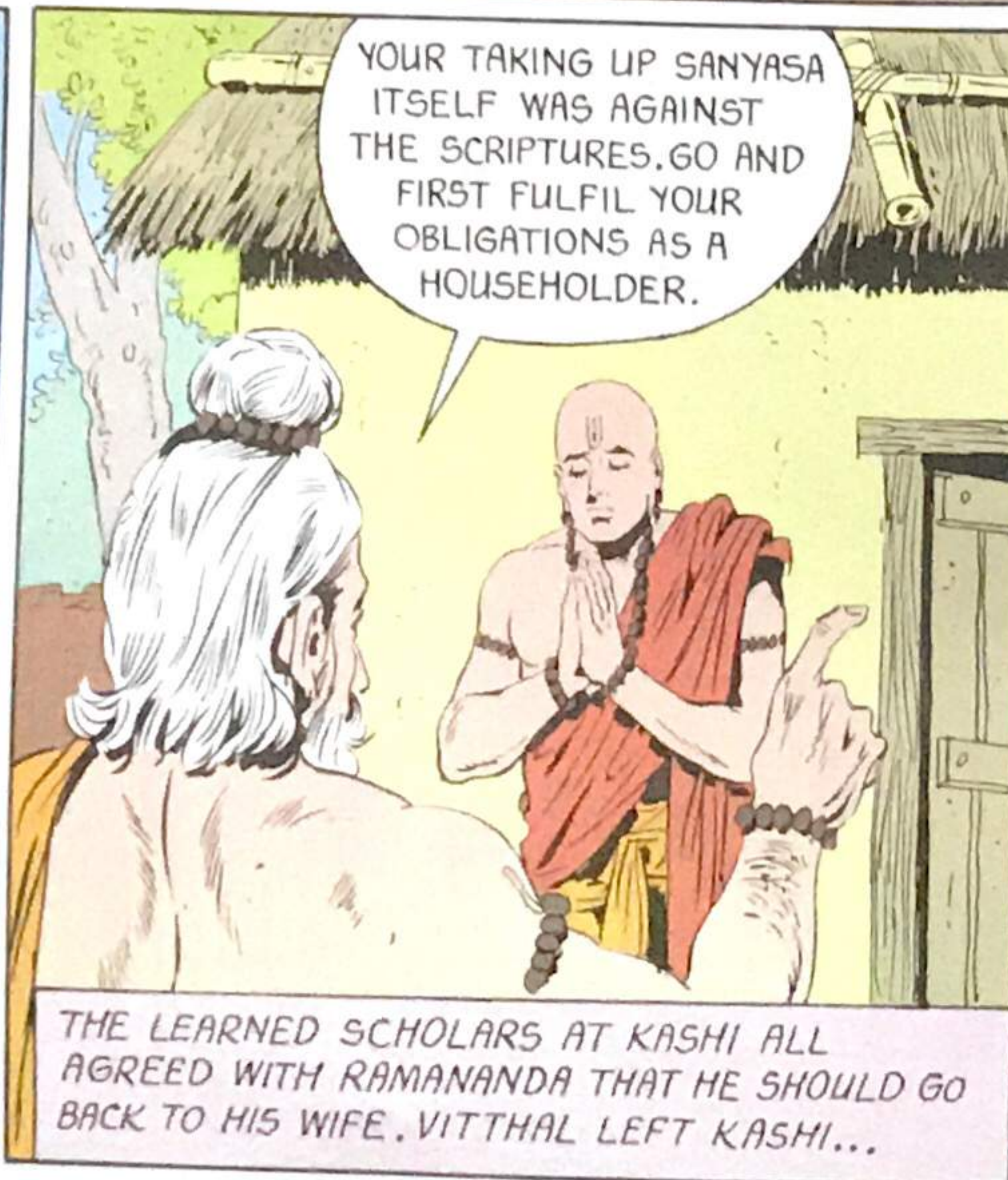
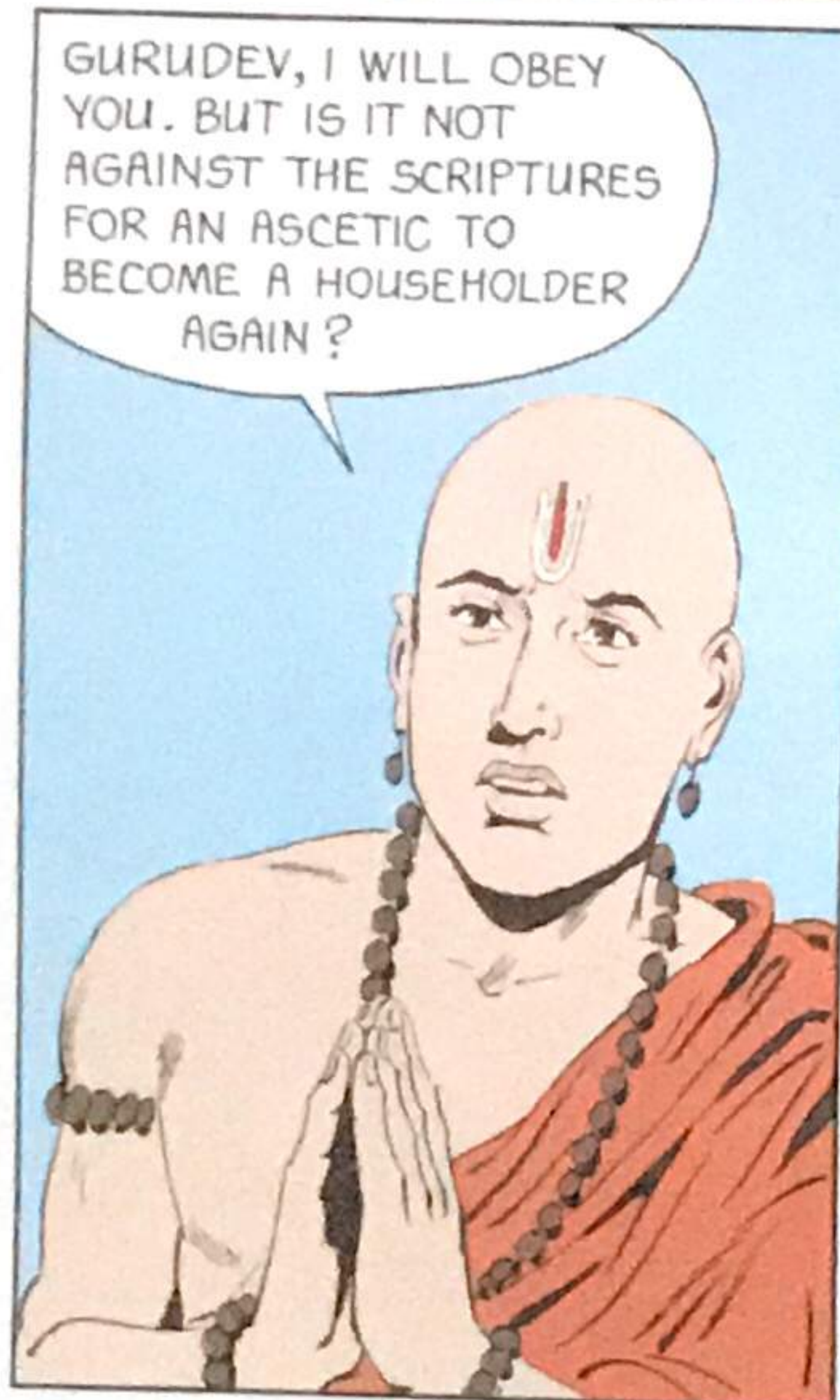
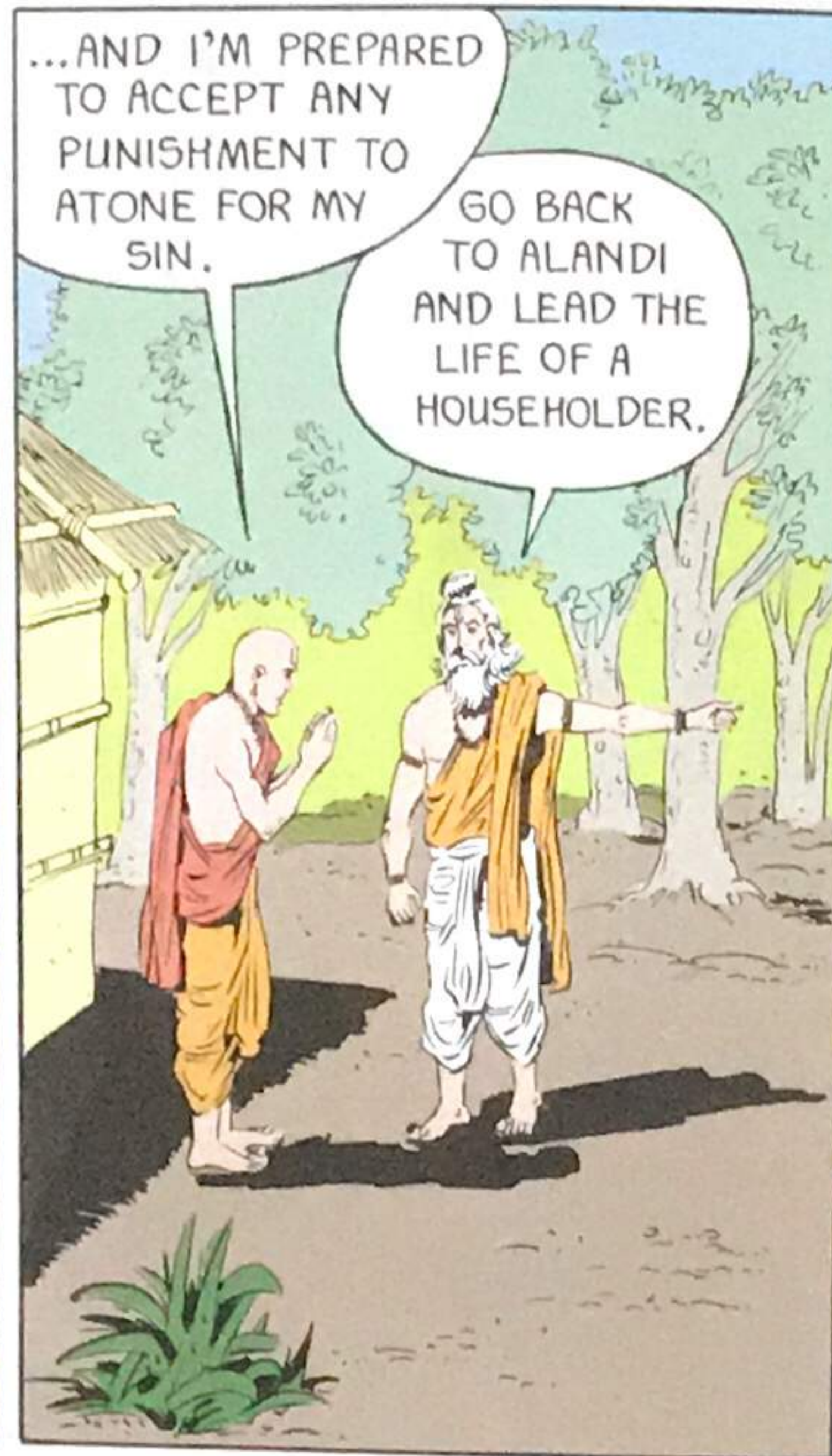
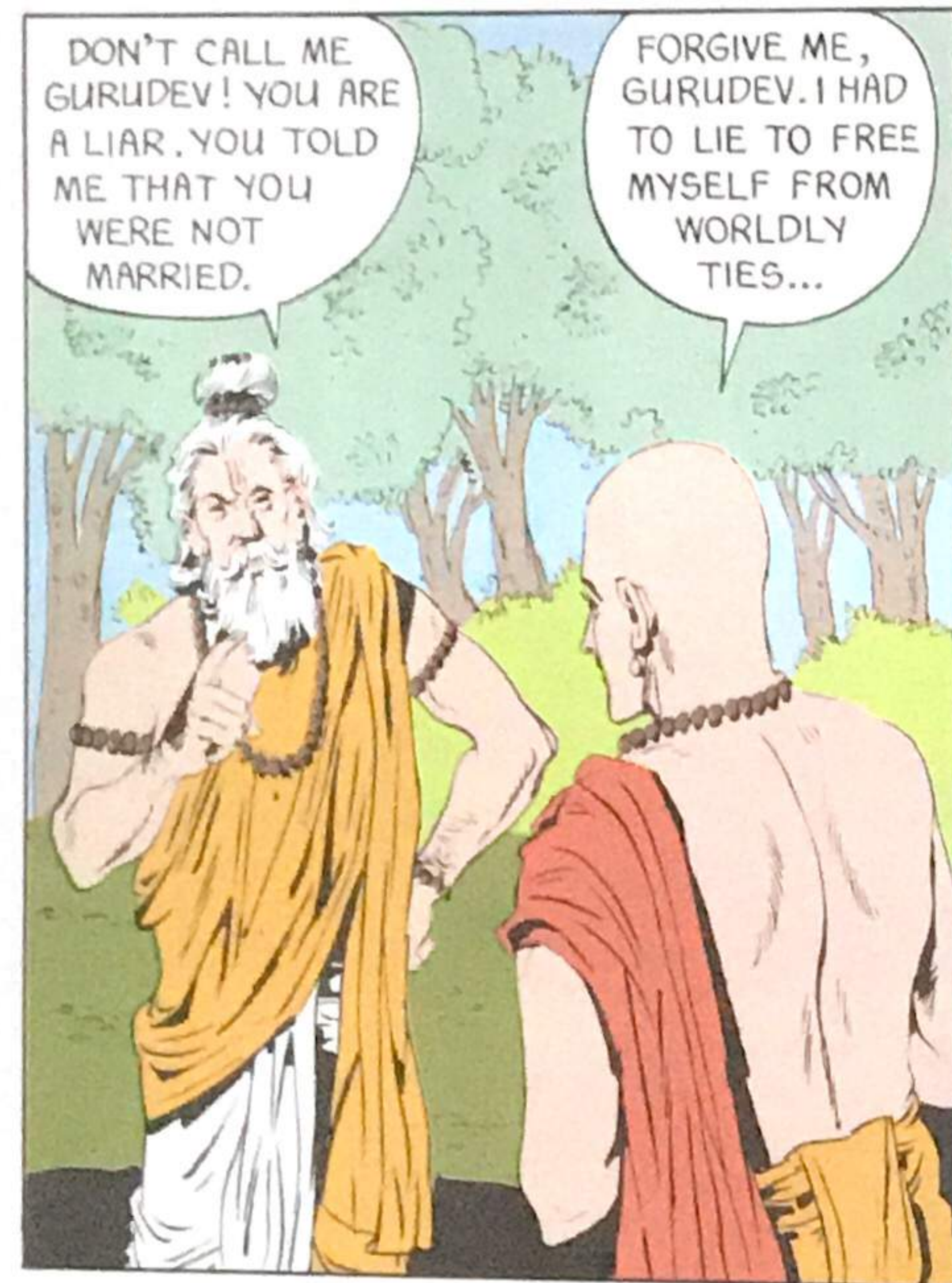
MY WORDS CANNOT PROVE FALSE. REST ASSURED, DAUGHTER. YOUR HUSBAND WILL COME BACK TO YOU.

WHEN RAMANANDA RETURNED TO HIS HERMITAGE AT KASHI—

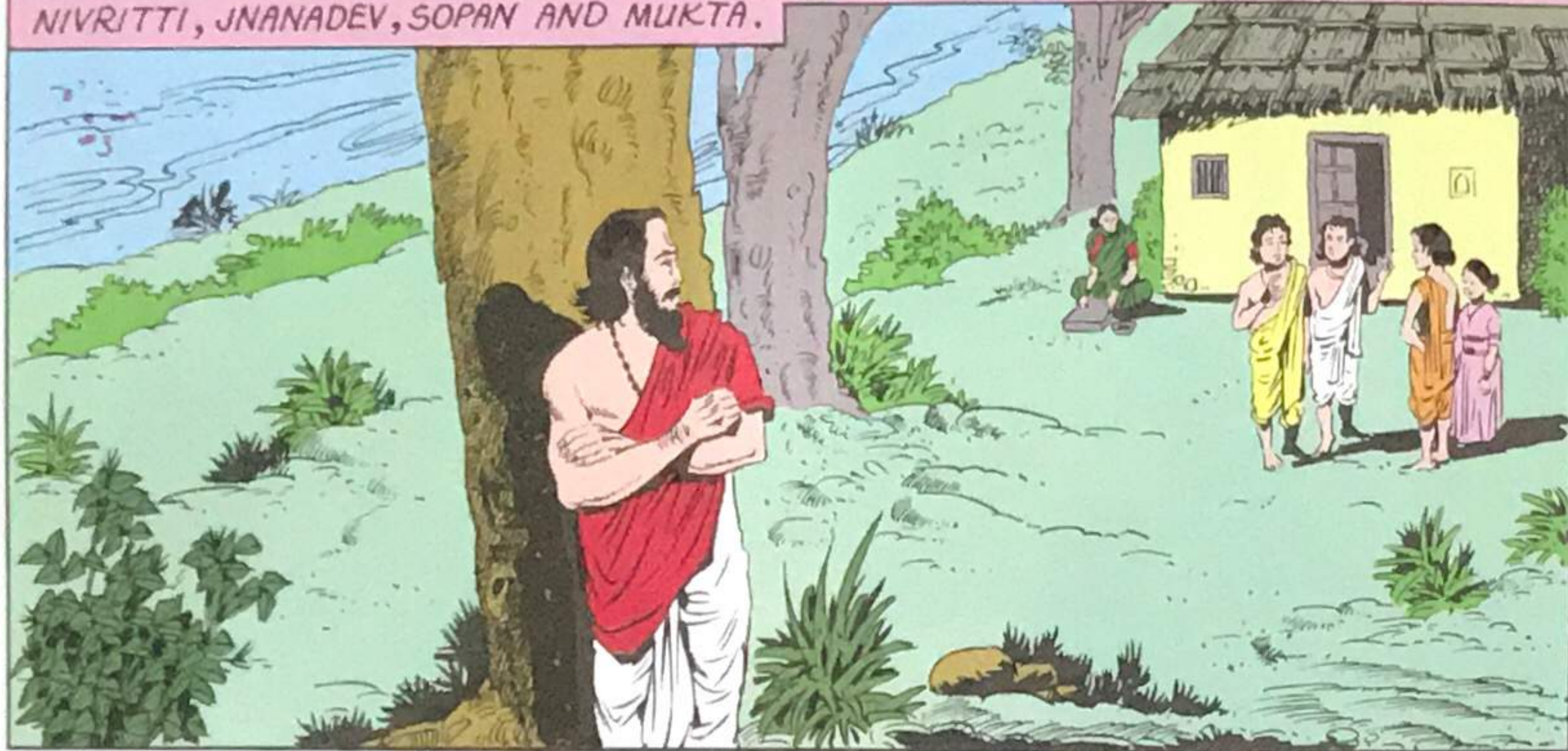


CHAITANYA SWAMI!

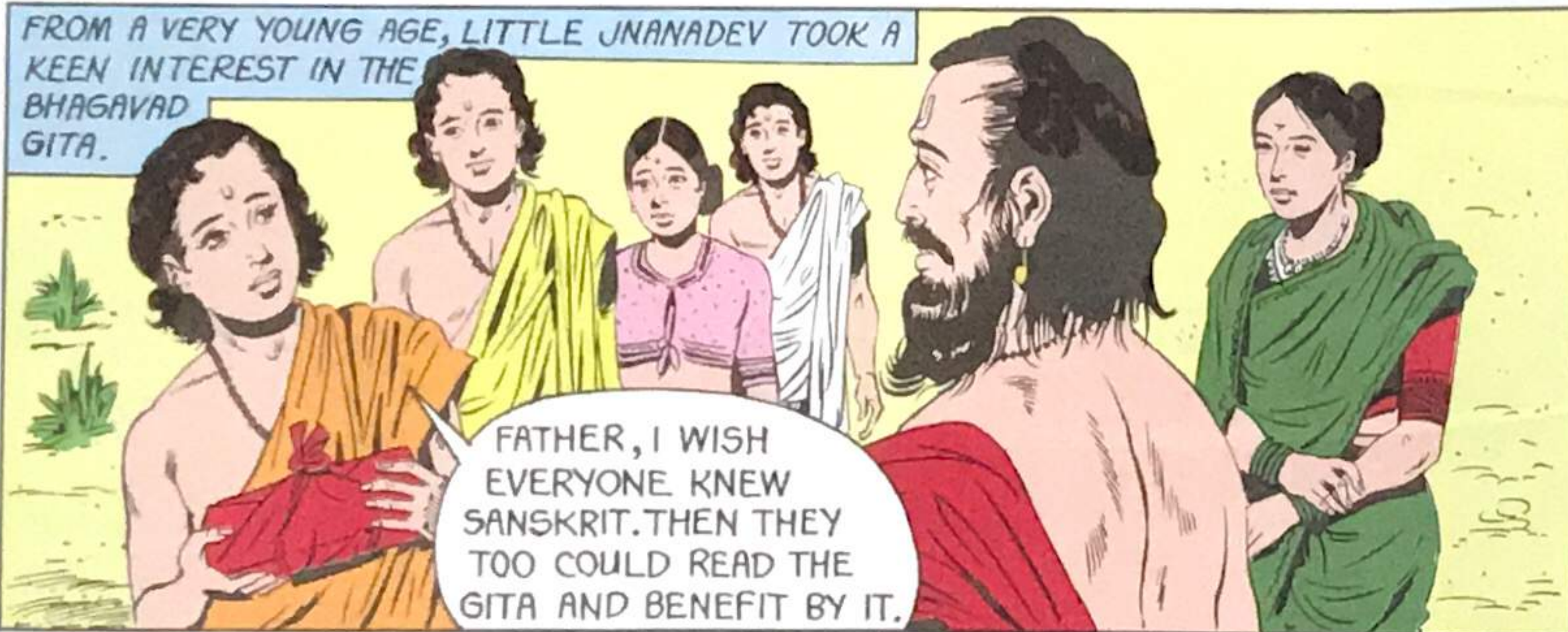
GURUDEV!



HE NOW BEGAN TO LIVE IN A SMALL HUT NEAR THE RIVER BANK. YEARS ROLLED BY. FOUR CHILDREN WERE BORN TO HIM AND RUKMINI. THEY WERE CALLED NIVRITTI, JNANADEV, SOPAN AND MUKTA.



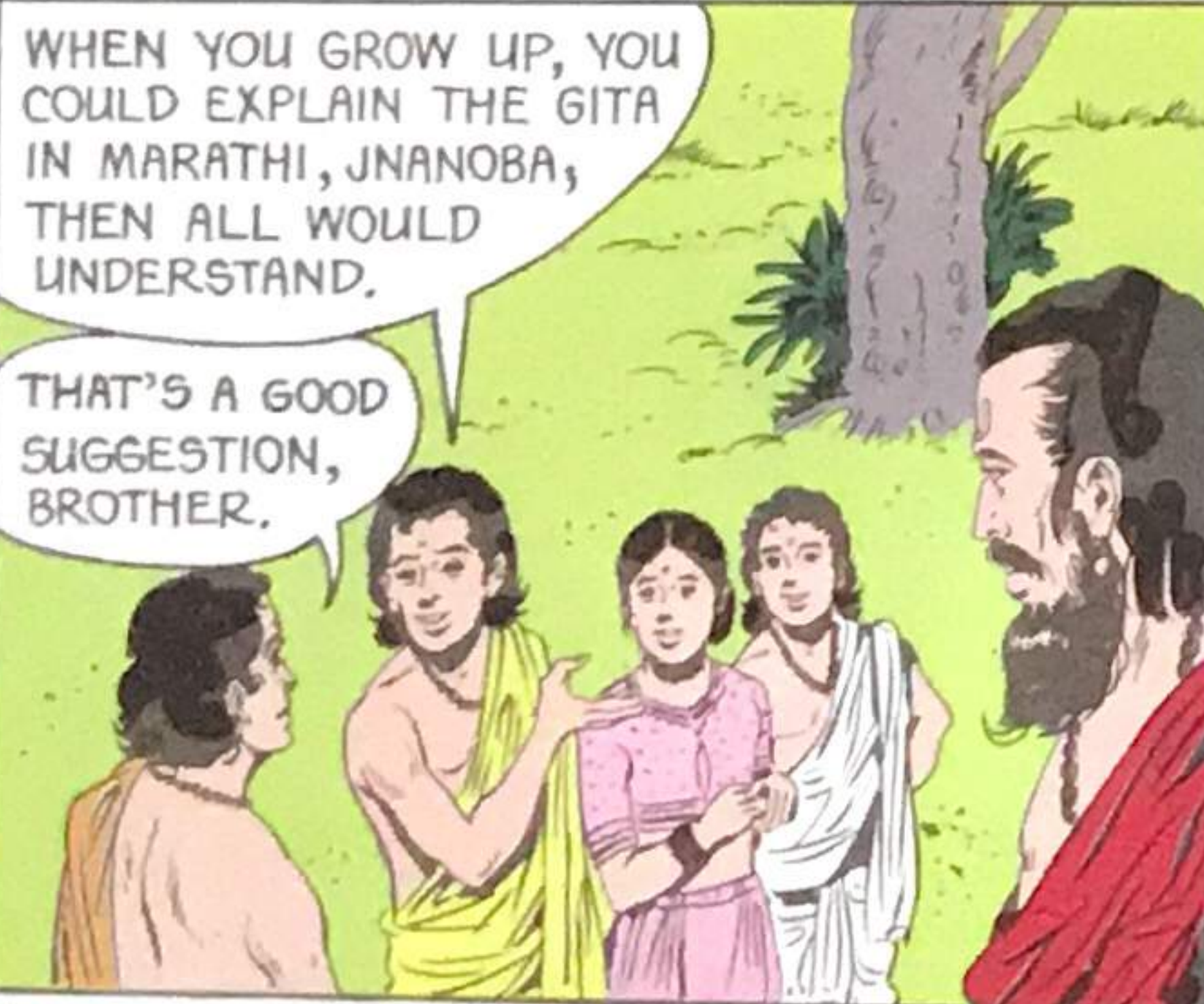
FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, LITTLE JNANADEV TOOK A KEEN INTEREST IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA.



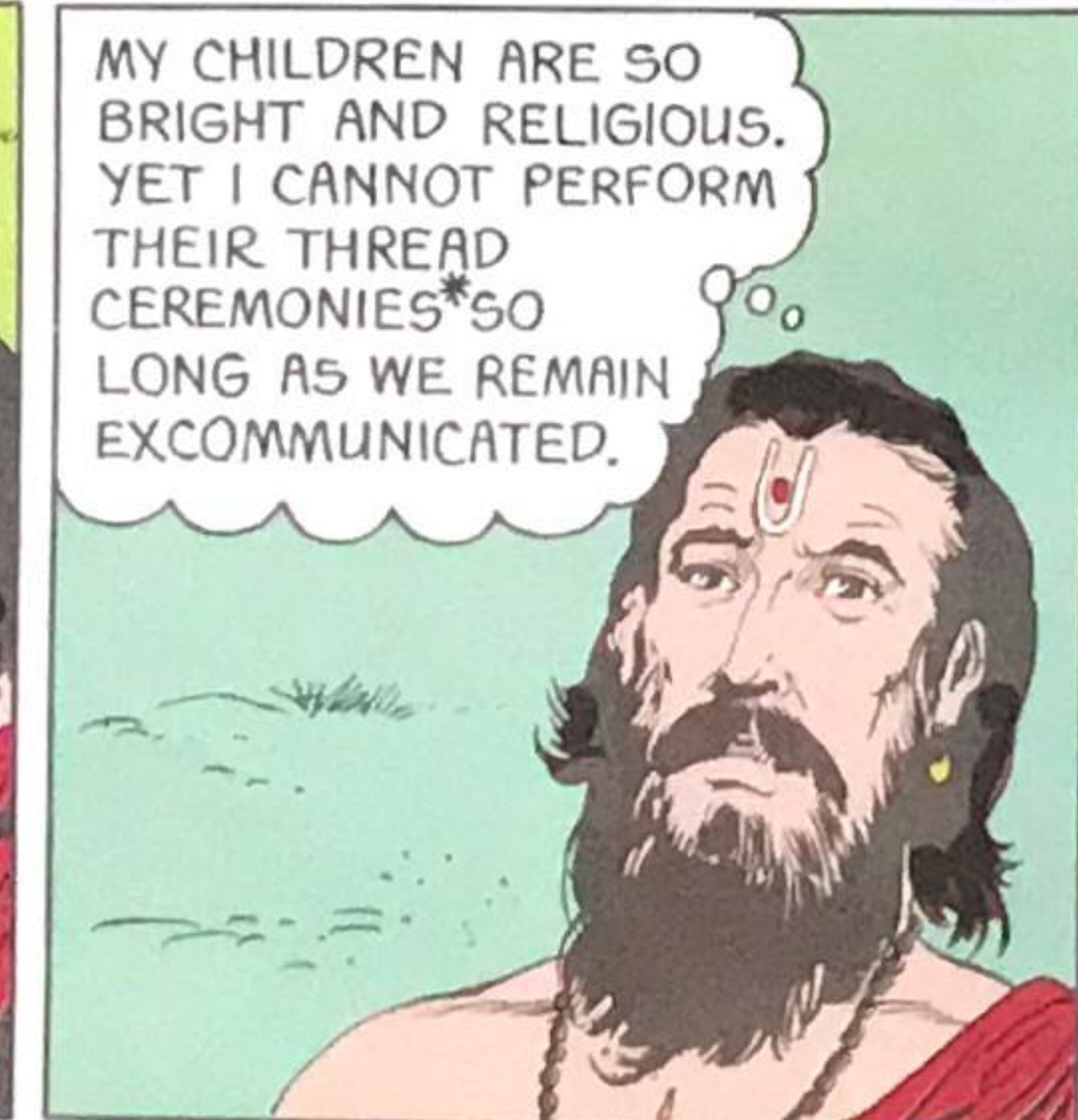
FATHER, I WISH EVERYONE KNEW SANSKRIT. THEN THEY TOO COULD READ THE GITA AND BENEFIT BY IT.

WHEN YOU GROW UP, YOU COULD EXPLAIN THE GITA IN MARATHI, JNANOBA, THEN ALL WOULD UNDERSTAND.

THAT'S A GOOD SUGGESTION, BROTHER.

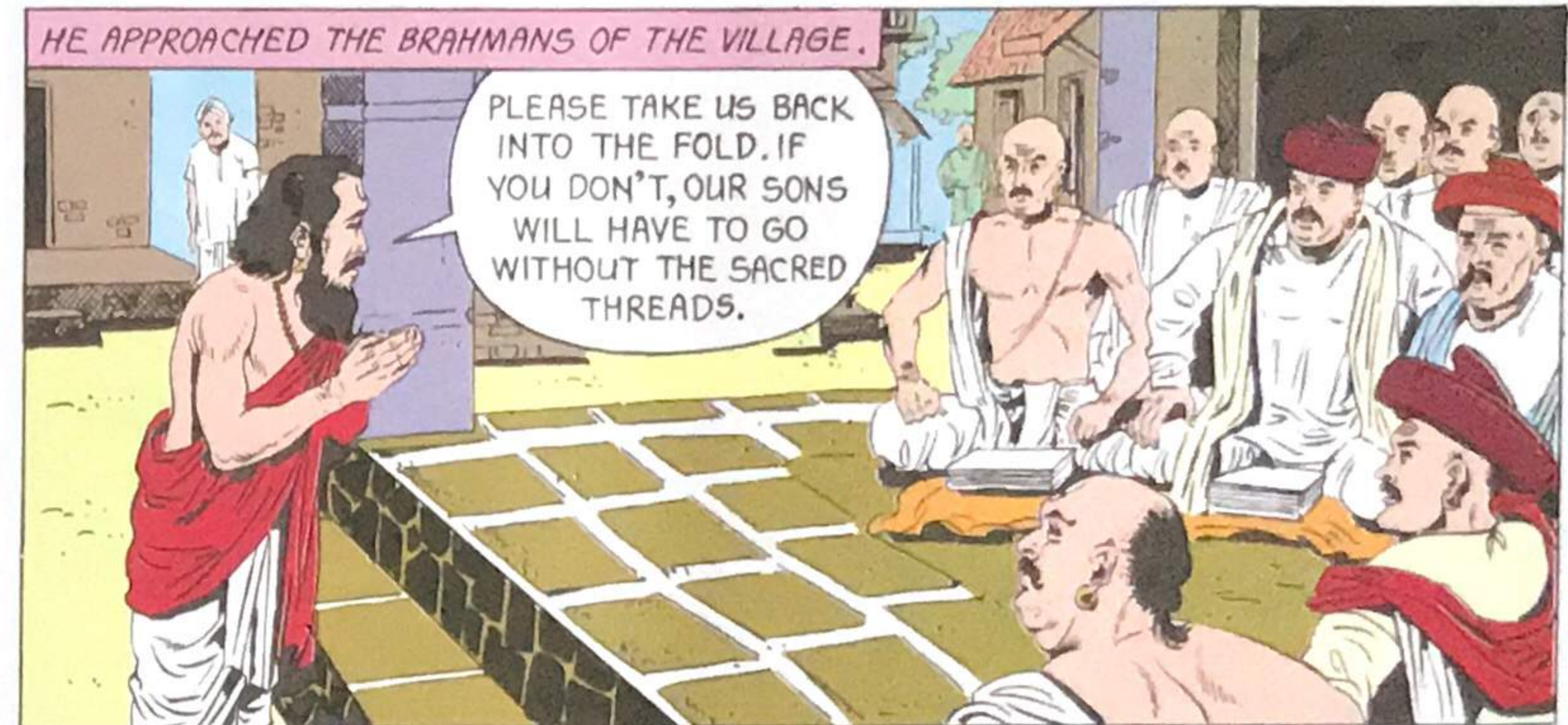


MY CHILDREN ARE SO BRIGHT AND RELIGIOUS. YET I CANNOT PERFORM THEIR THREAD CEREMONIES* SO LONG AS WE REMAIN EXCOMMUNICATED.

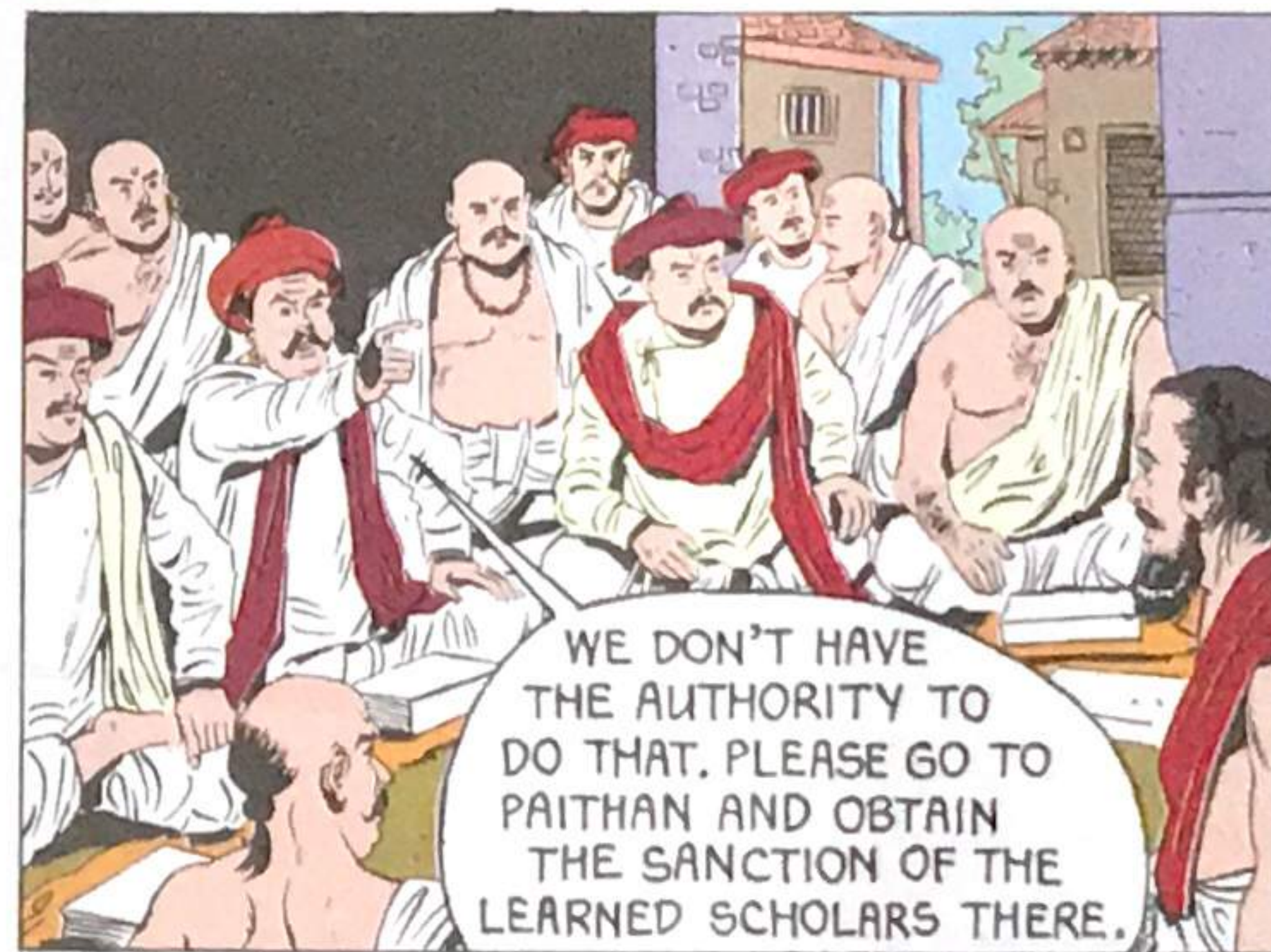


*A CEREMONY PERFORMED AT WHICH A BOY IS INVESTED WITH THE SACRED THREAD. IN ANCIENT INDIA IT WAS ONLY AFTER THIS CEREMONY THAT THE BOY WAS TAKEN TO THE ABODE OF A GURU.

HE APPROACHED THE BRAHMANS OF THE VILLAGE.



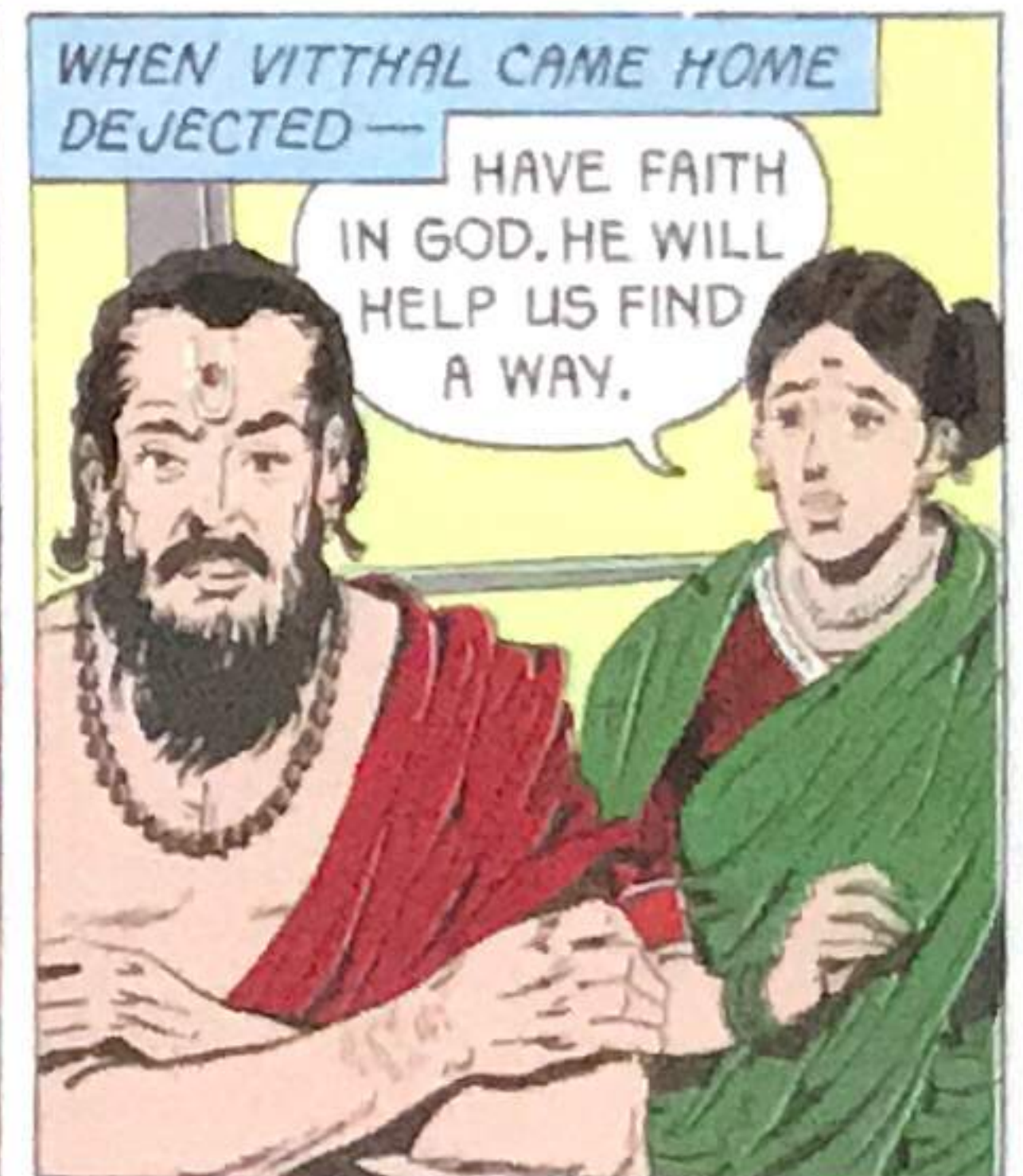
PLEASE TAKE US BACK INTO THE FOLD. IF YOU DON'T, OUR SONS WILL HAVE TO GO WITHOUT THE SACRED THREADS.



WE DON'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DO THAT. PLEASE GO TO PAITHAN AND OBTAIN THE SANCTION OF THE LEARNED SCHOLARS THERE.

WHEN VITTHAL CAME HOME DEJECTED—

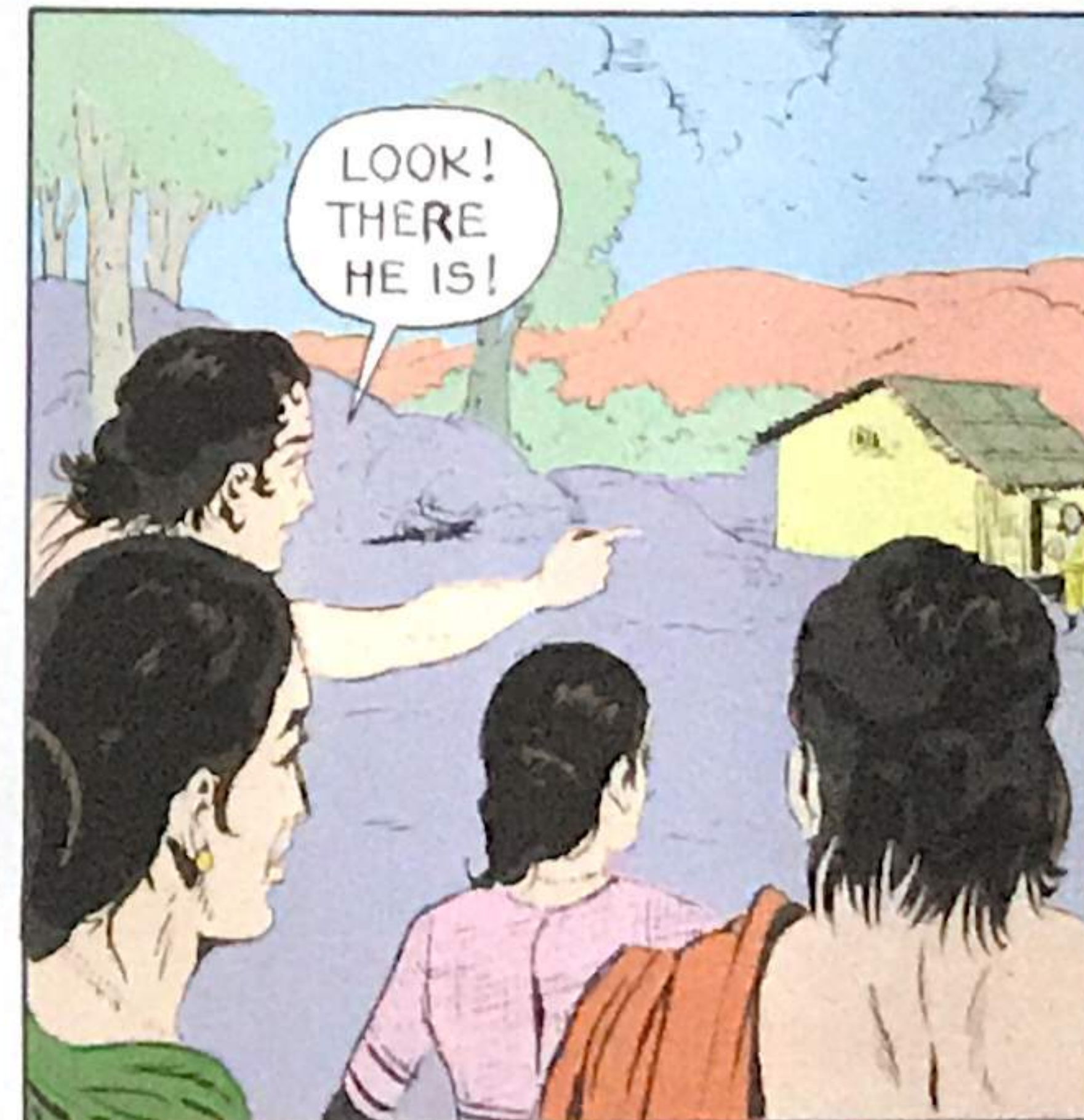
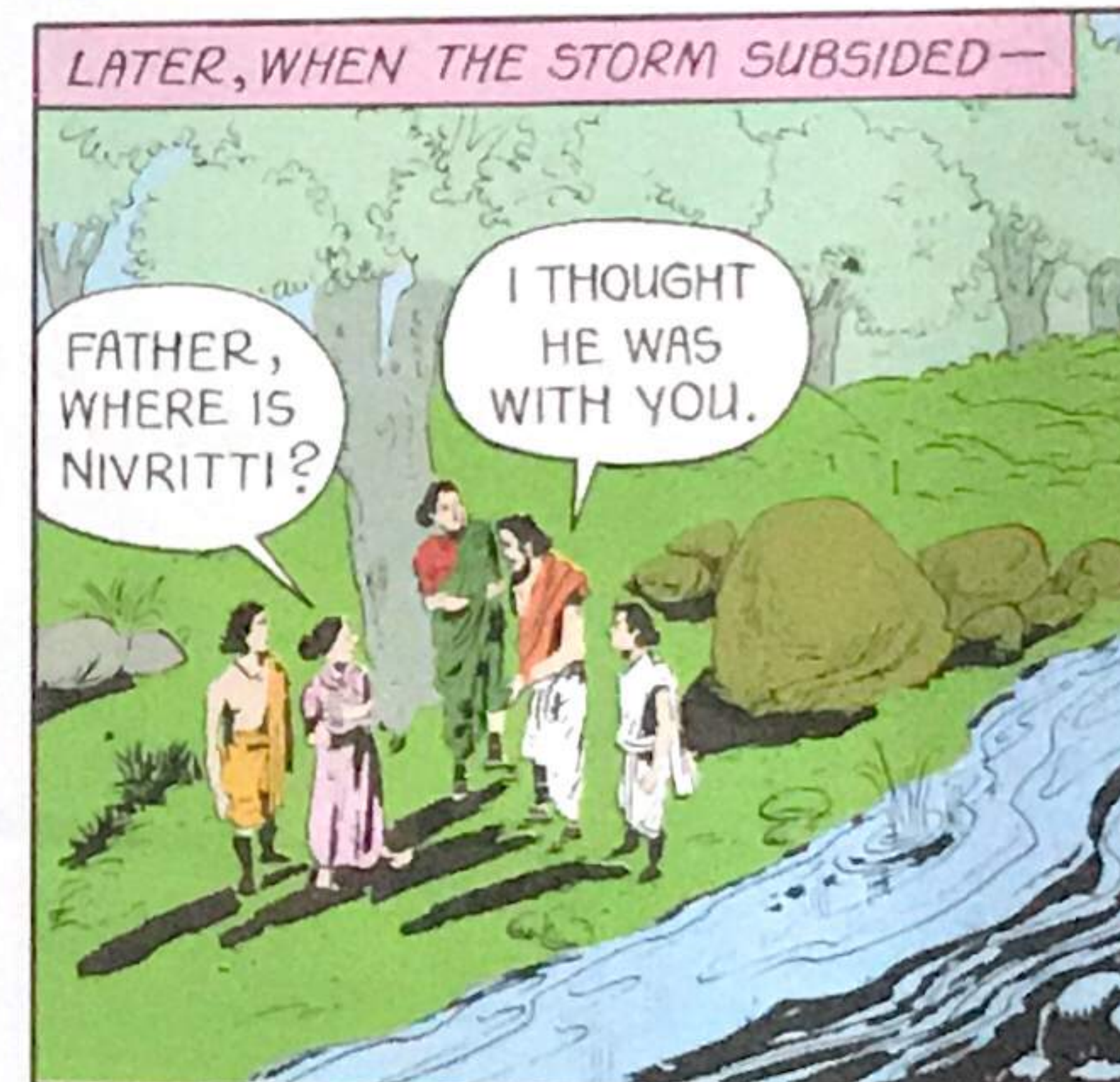
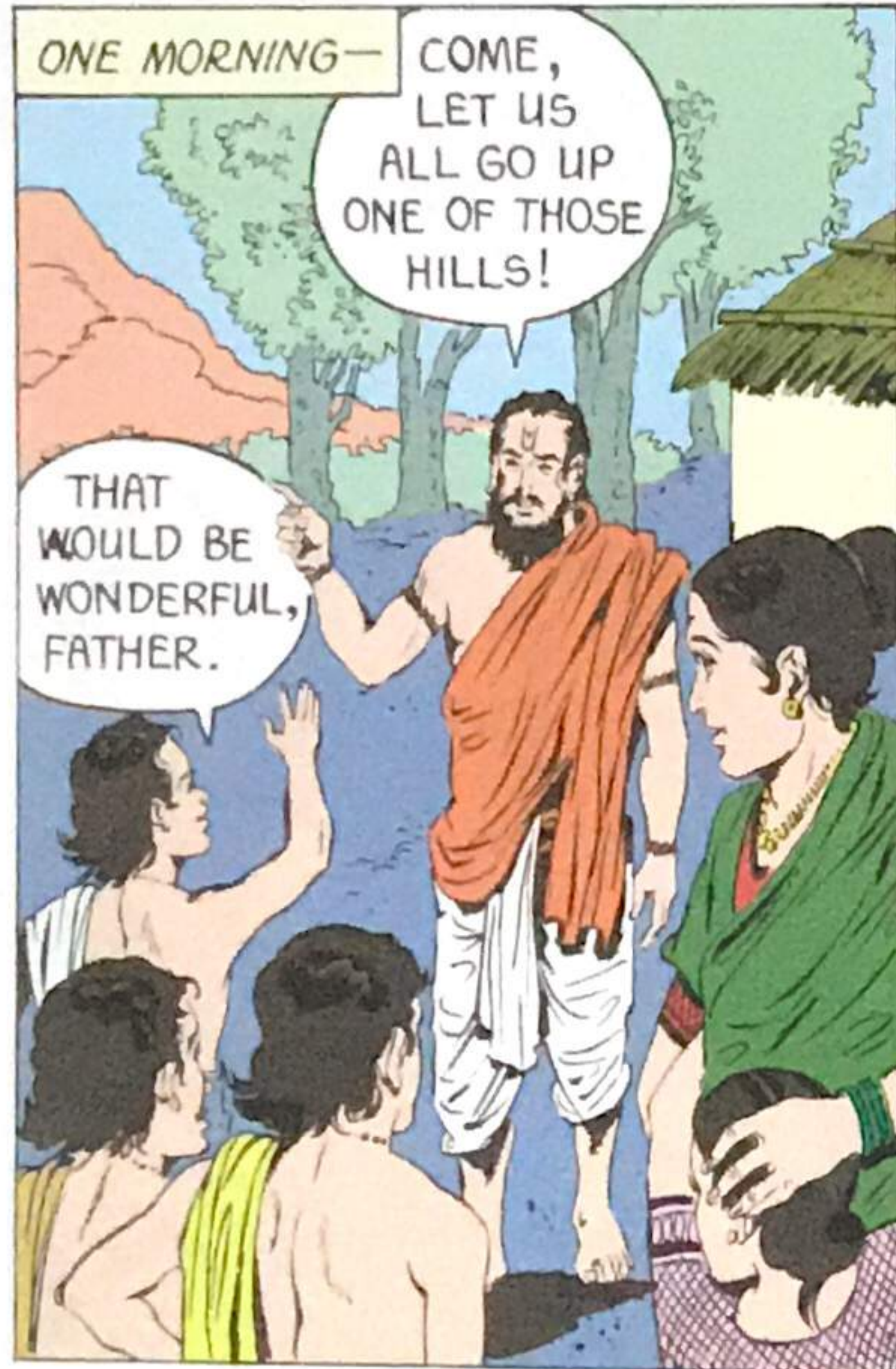
HAVE FAITH IN GOD. HE WILL HELP US FIND A WAY.

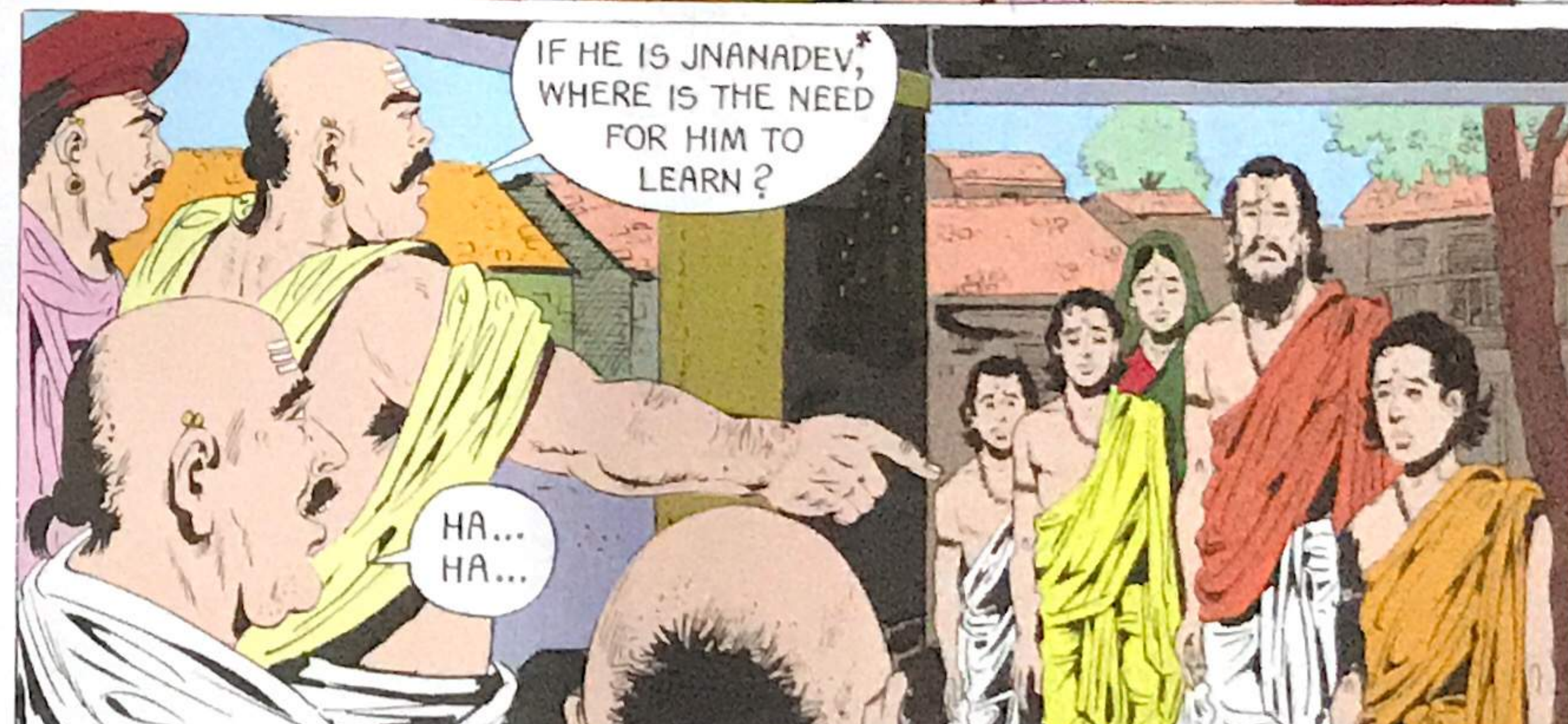
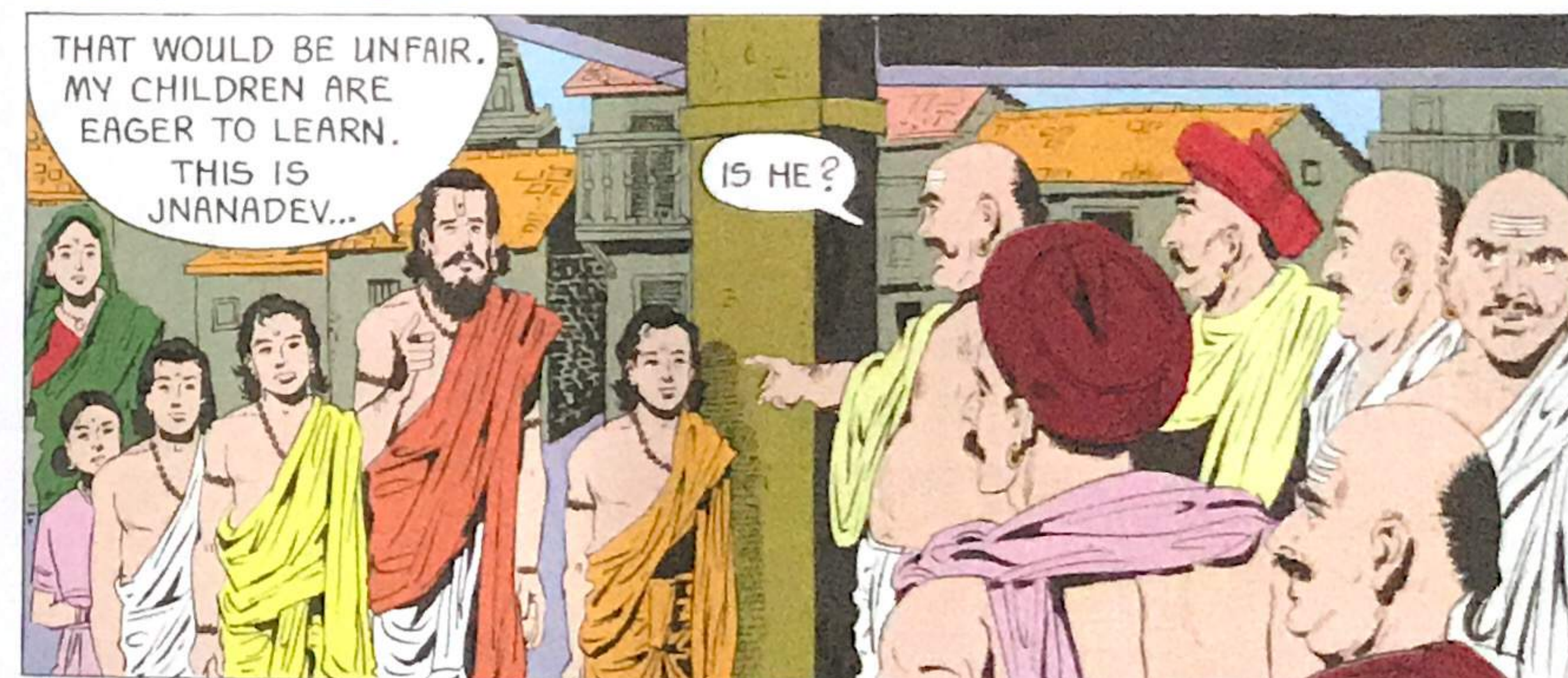
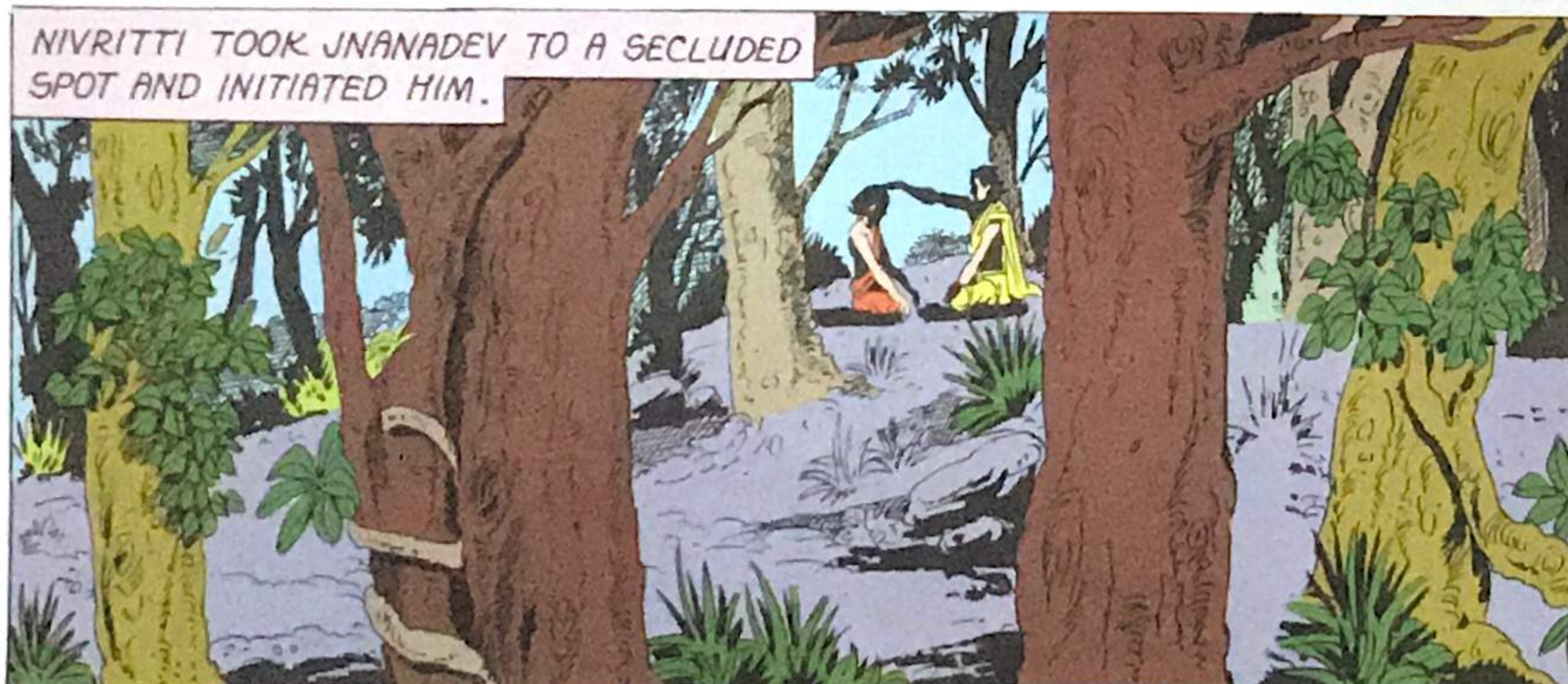
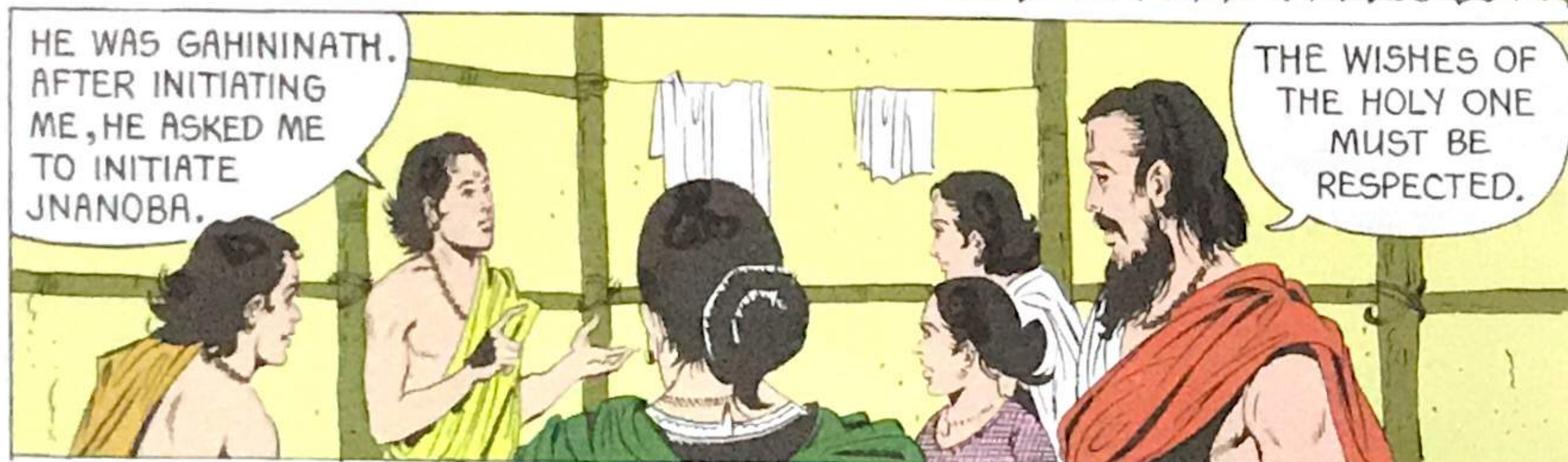
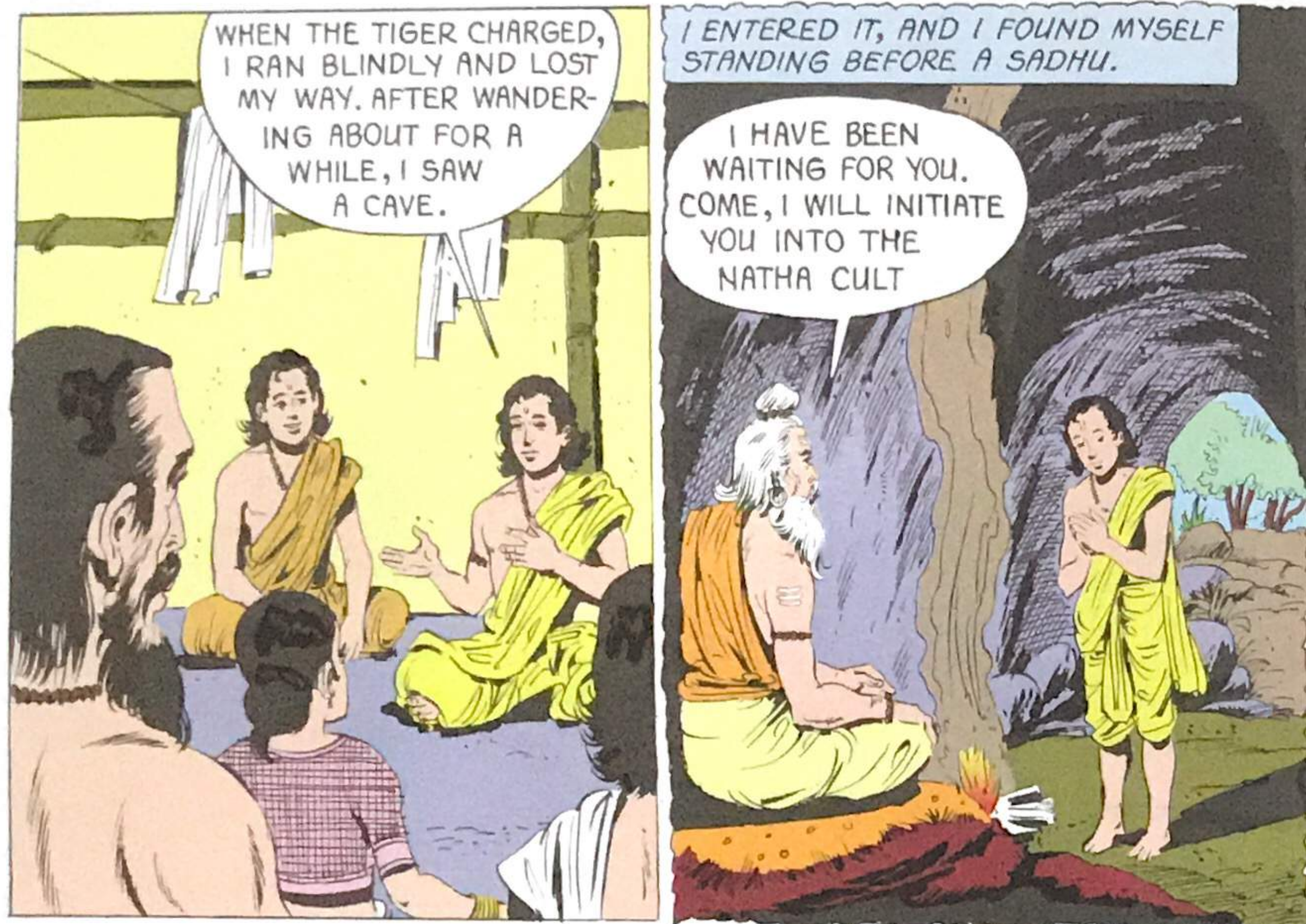


VITTHAL TOOK HIS FAMILY TO TRYAMBAK*. THERE HE AND HIS WIFE SPENT LONG HOURS IN PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

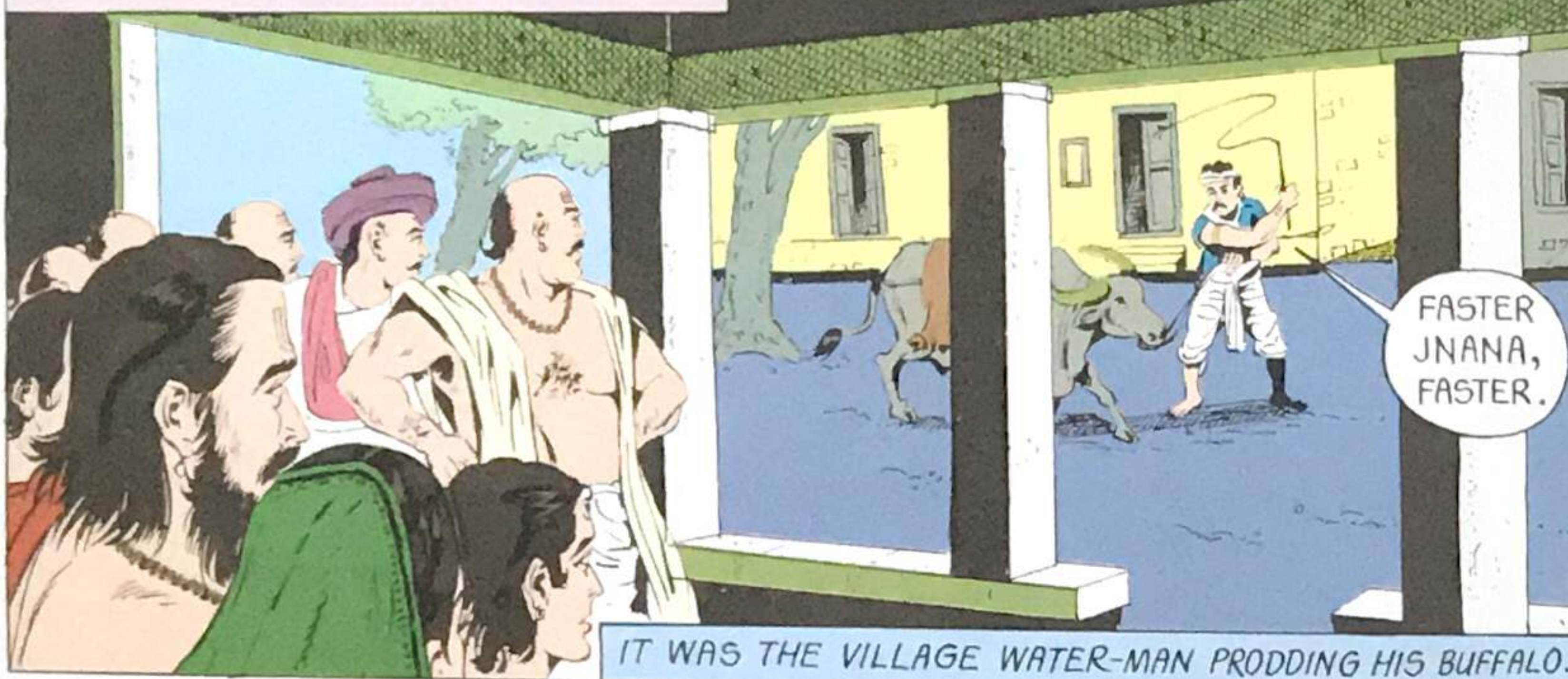


*A HOLY PLACE NEAR NASIK.



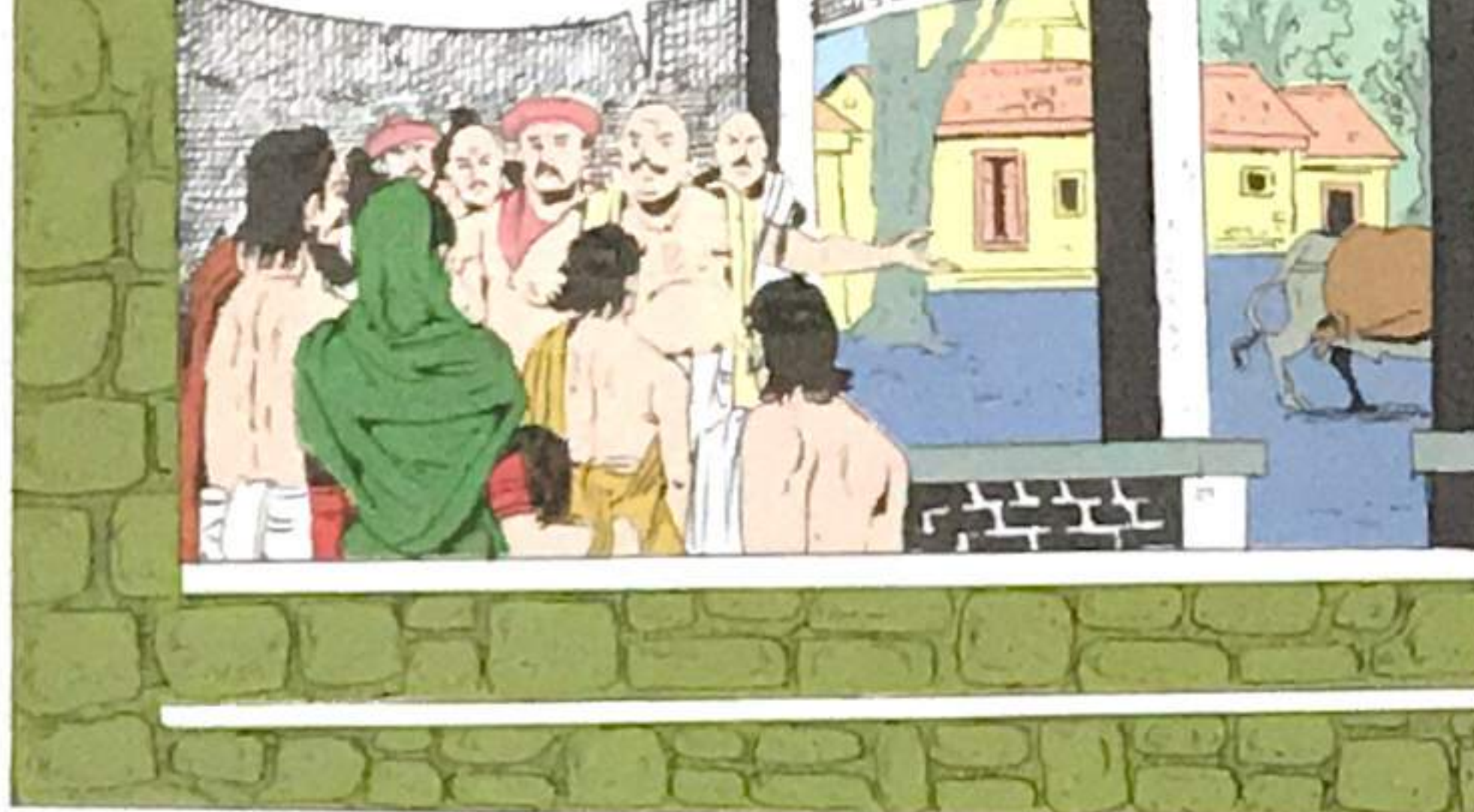


JUST THEN THEY HEARD A VOICE—



IT WAS THE VILLAGE WATER-MAN PRODDING HIS BUFFALO.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR JNANADEV AND THAT BUFFALO, JNANA?

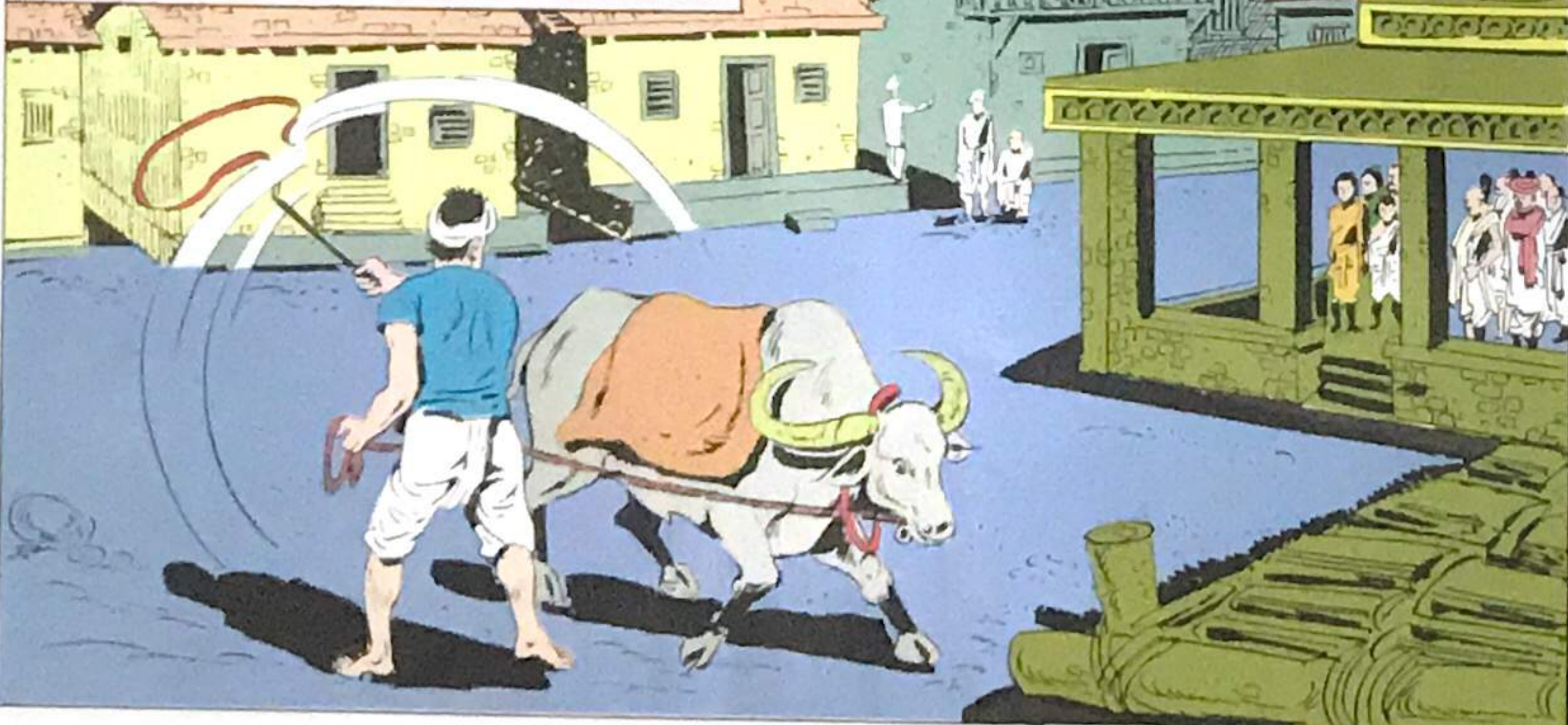


AS THE ASSEMBLY OF BRAHMAN BURST INTO LAUGHTER, JNANADEV'S SOFT VOICE WAS HEARD.

THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE AT ALL.



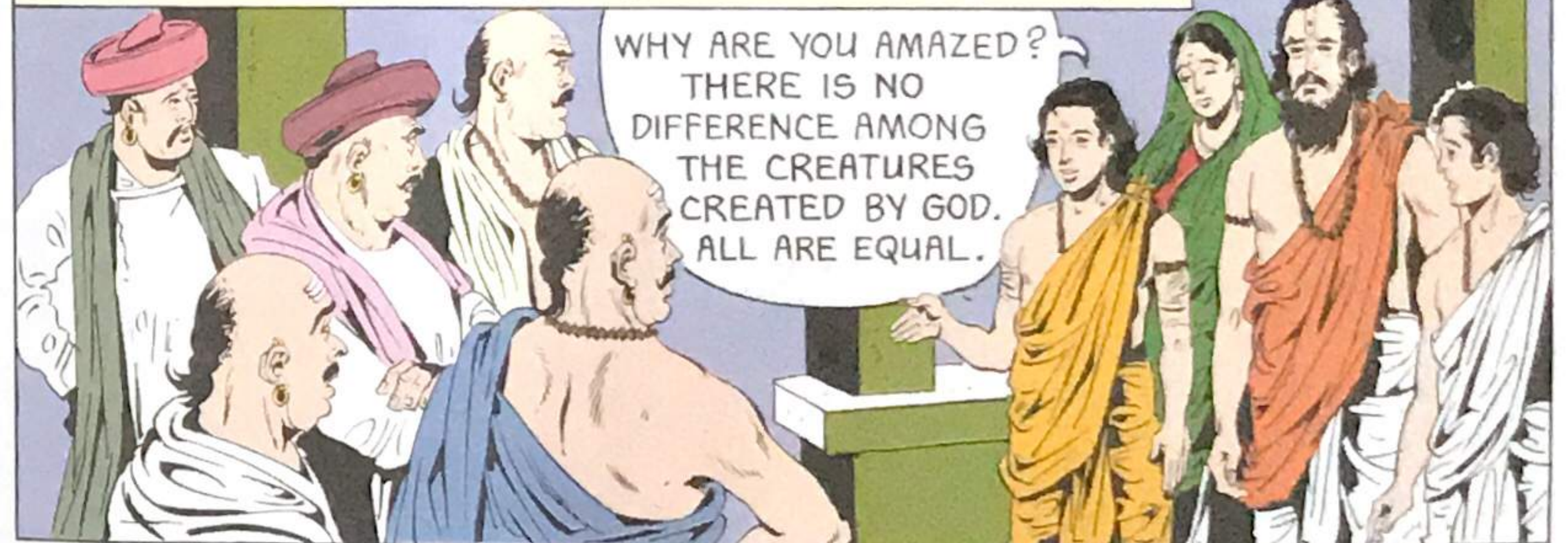
JUST THEN, THE WATER-MAN BROUGHT HIS WHIP DOWN ON THE BACK OF JNANA, THE BUFFALO.



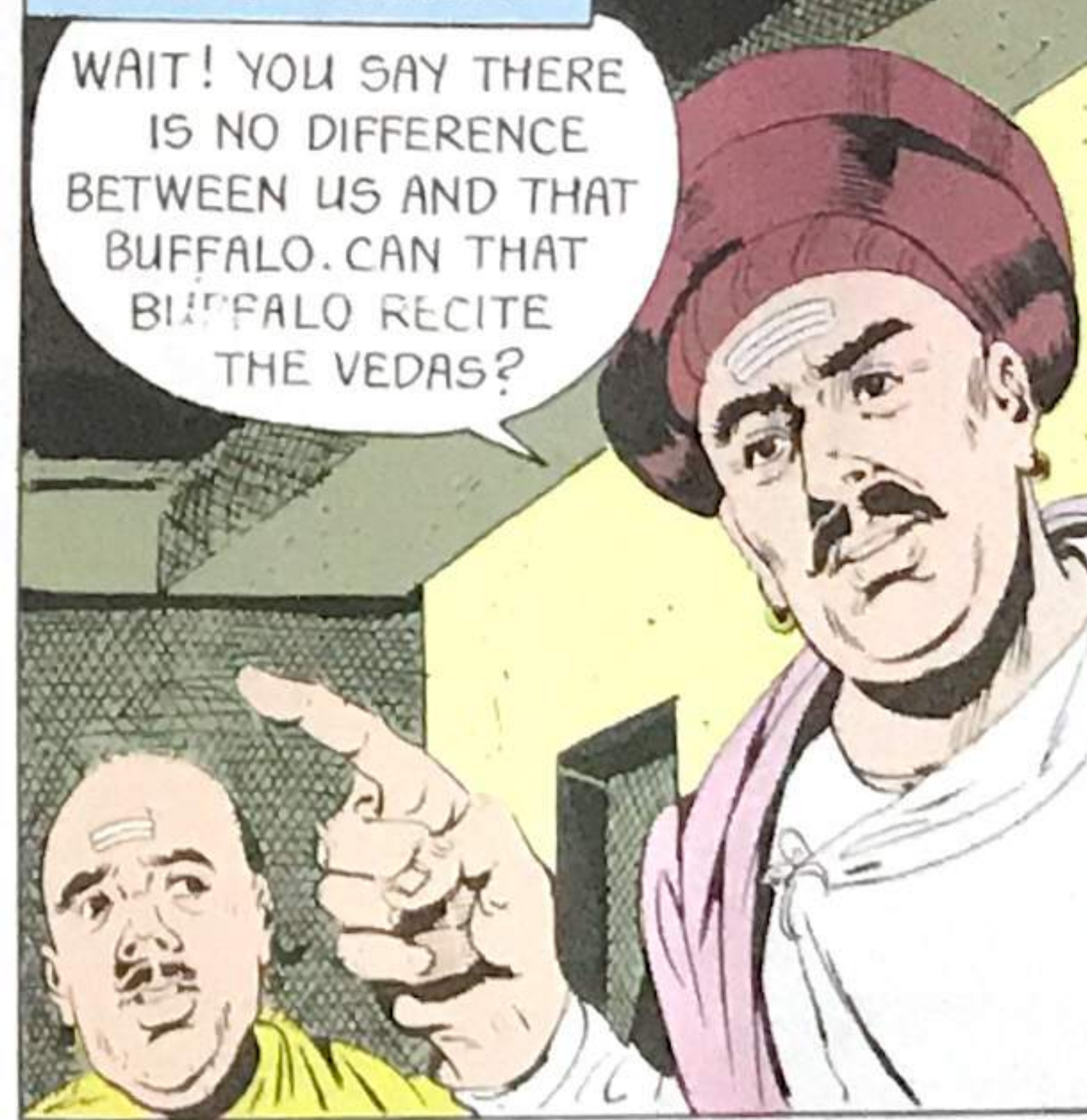
THE NEXT MOMENT—



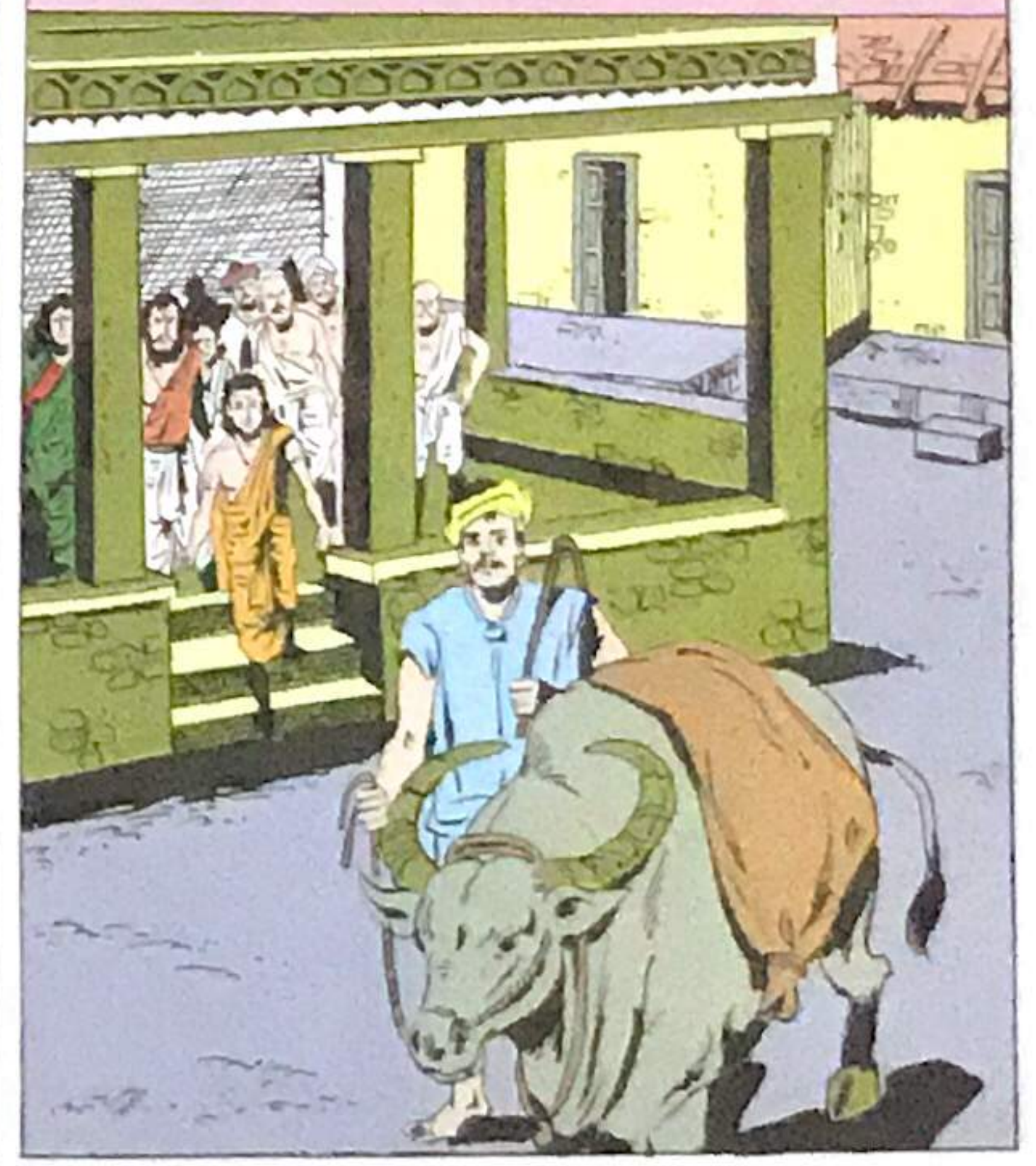
BUT JNANADEV WAS SERENE AND SHOWED NO SIGN OF SURPRISE.

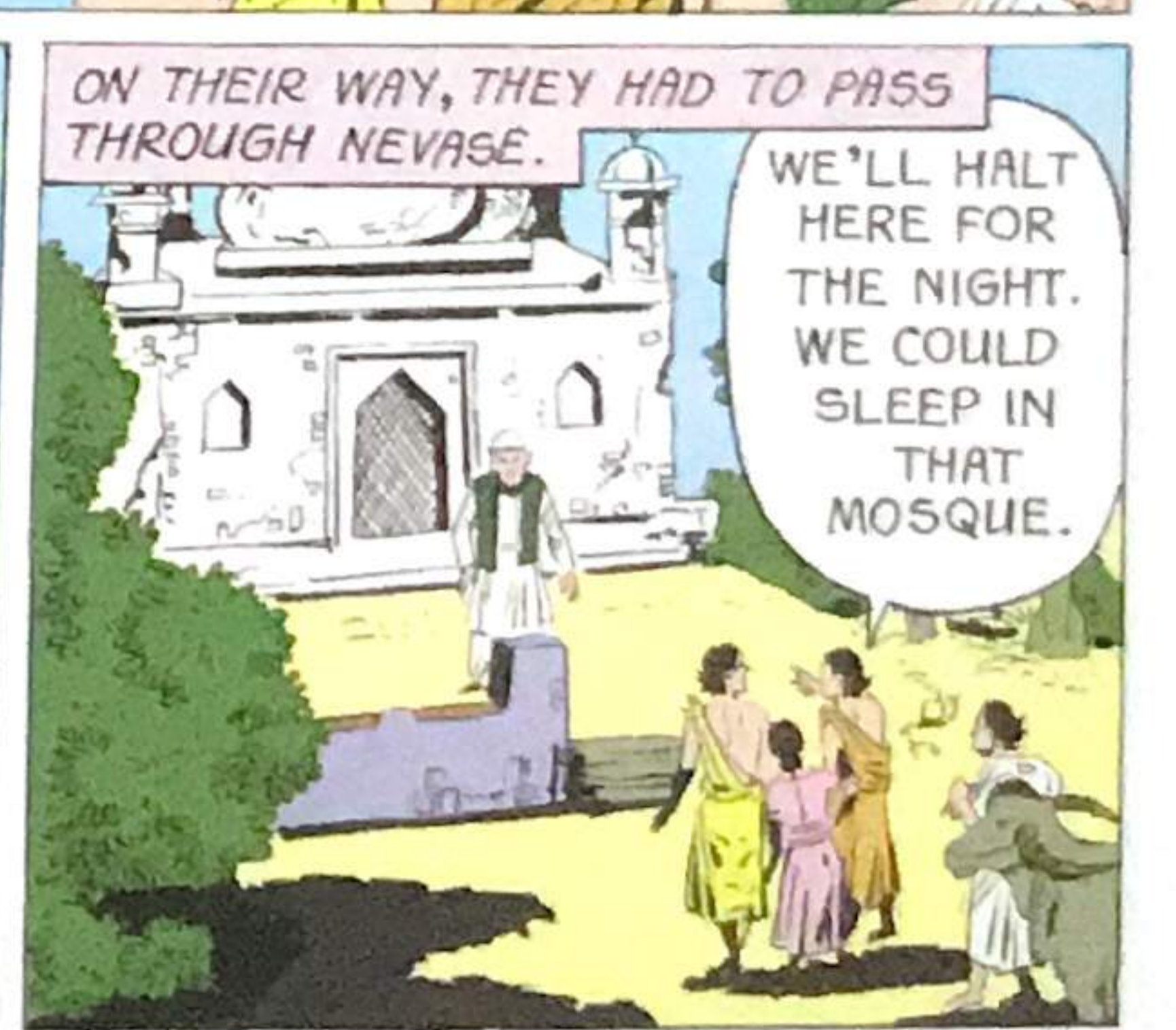
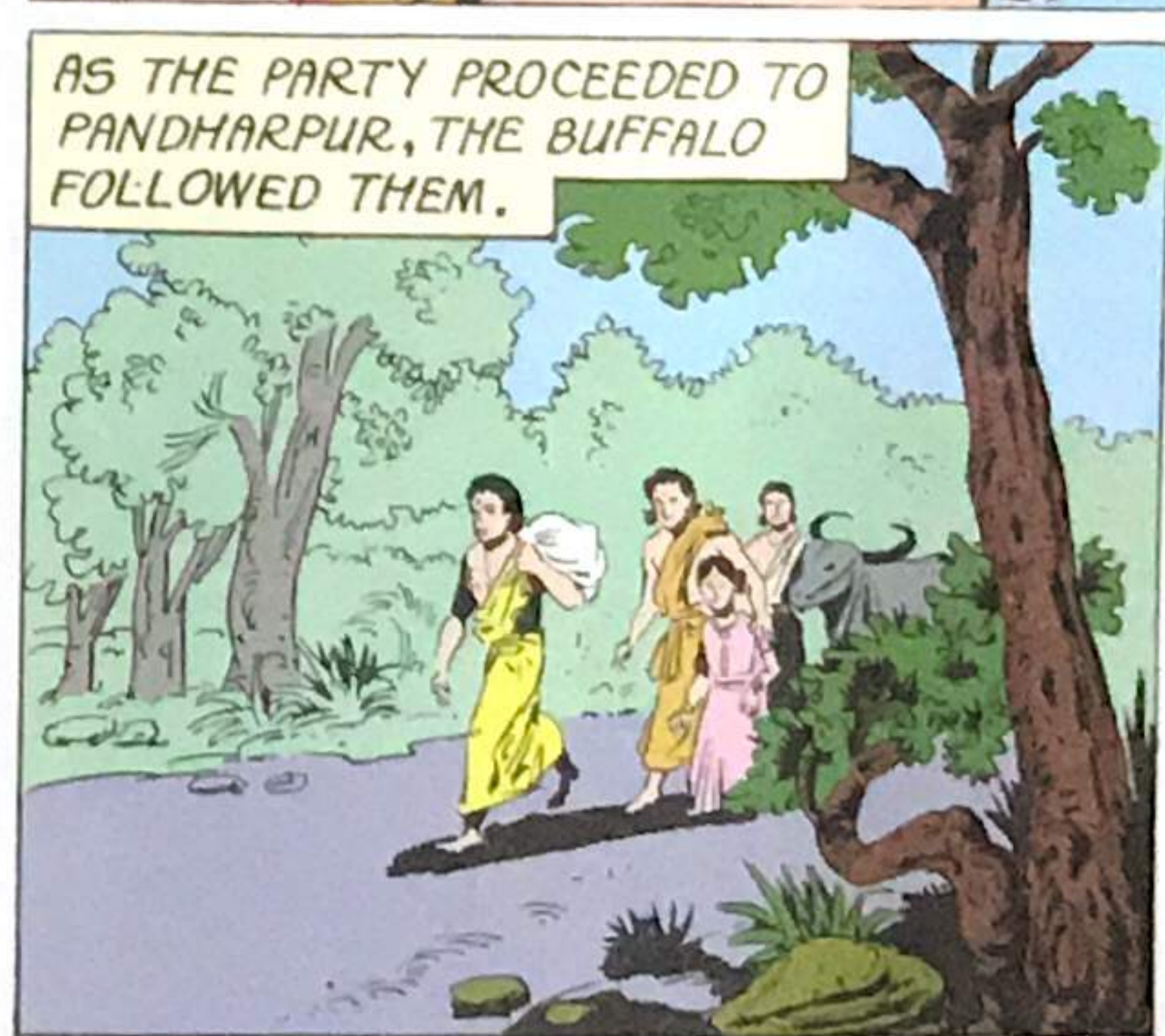
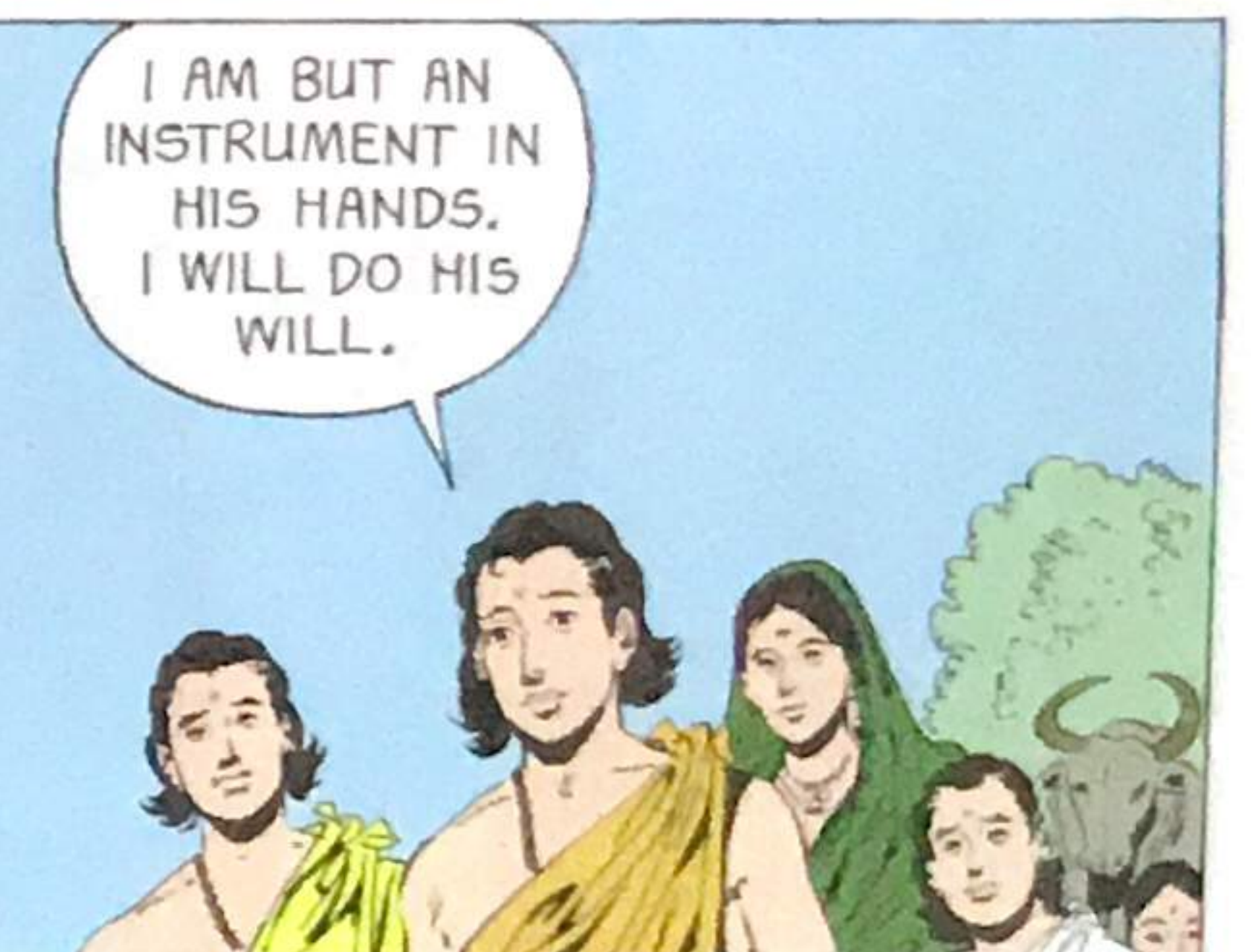
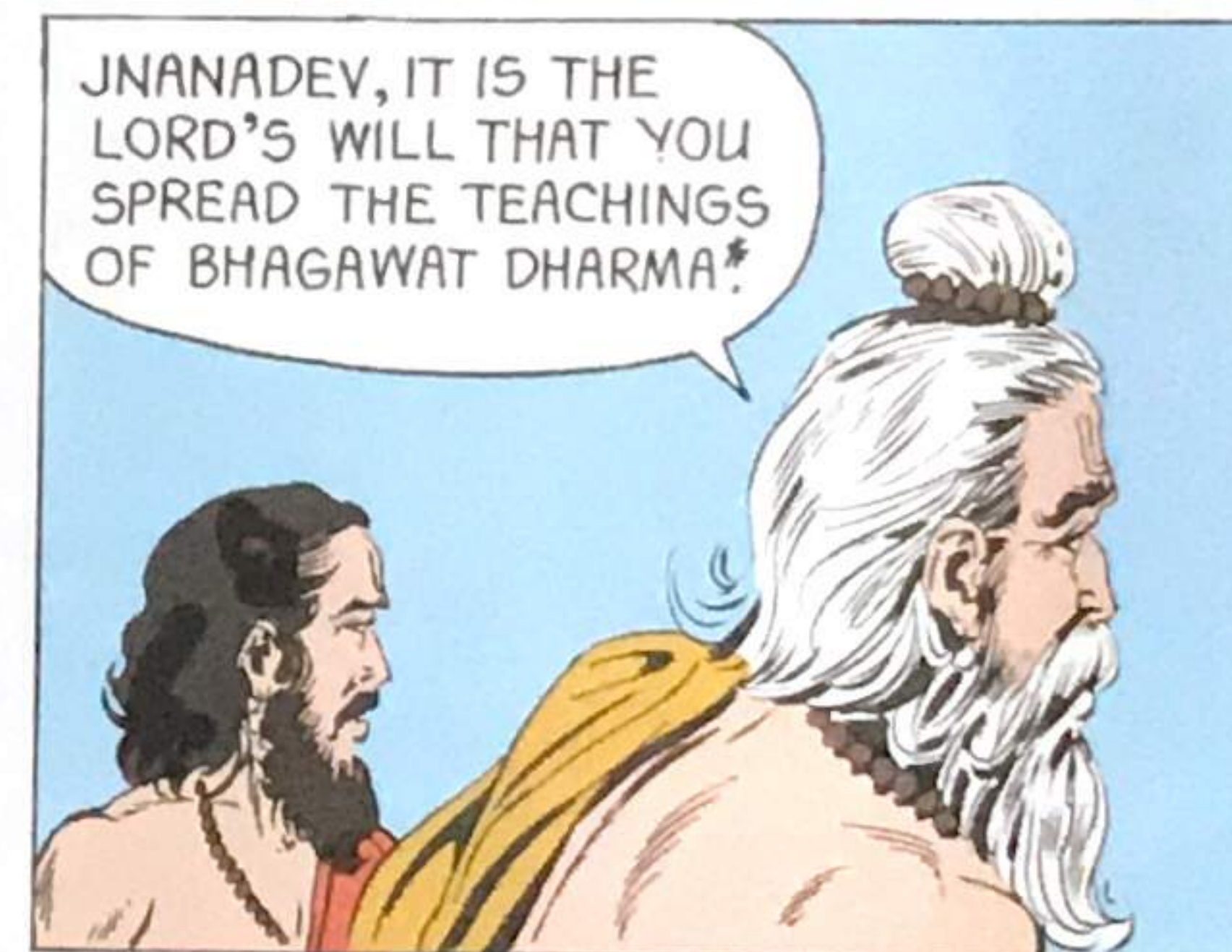
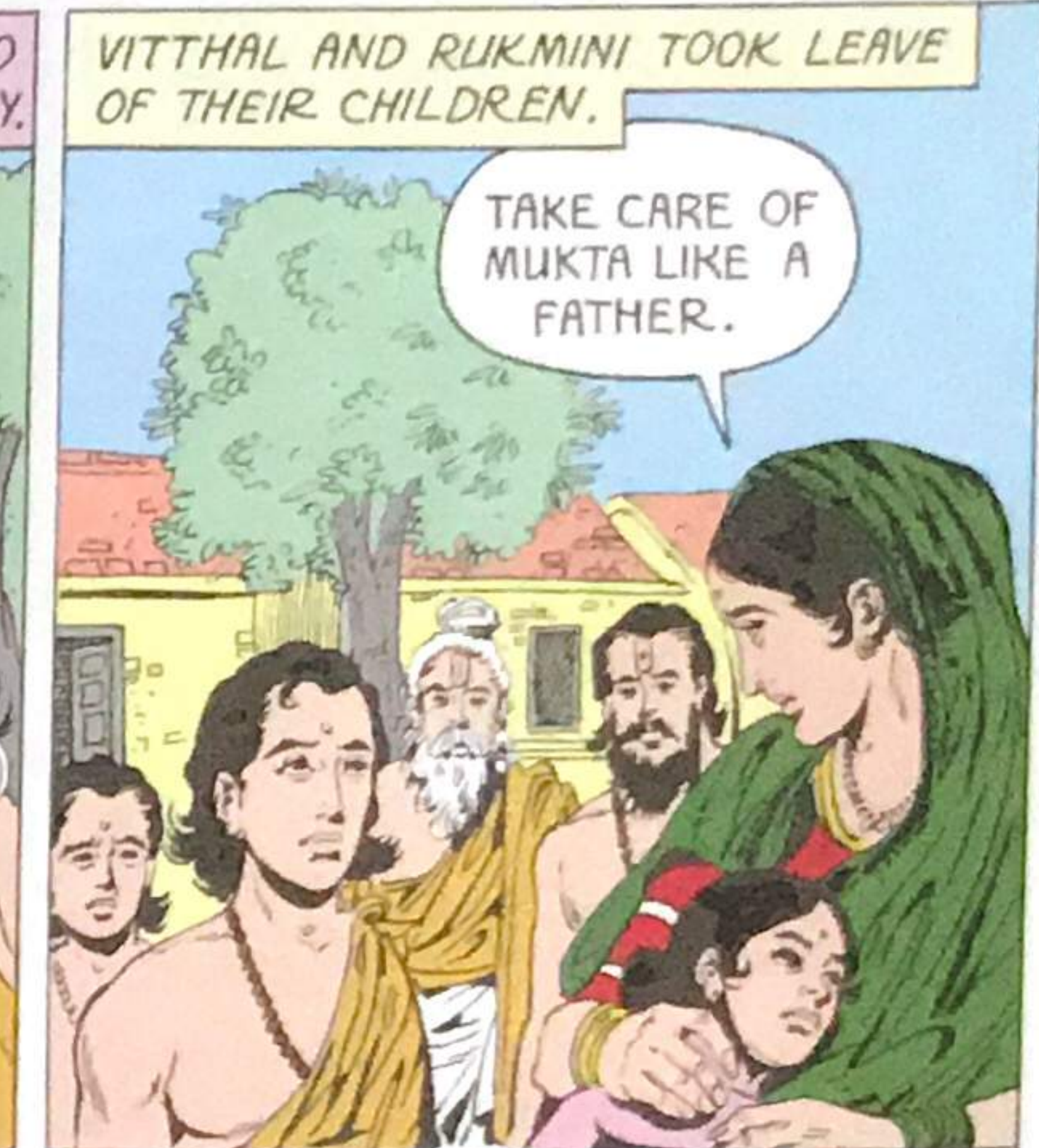
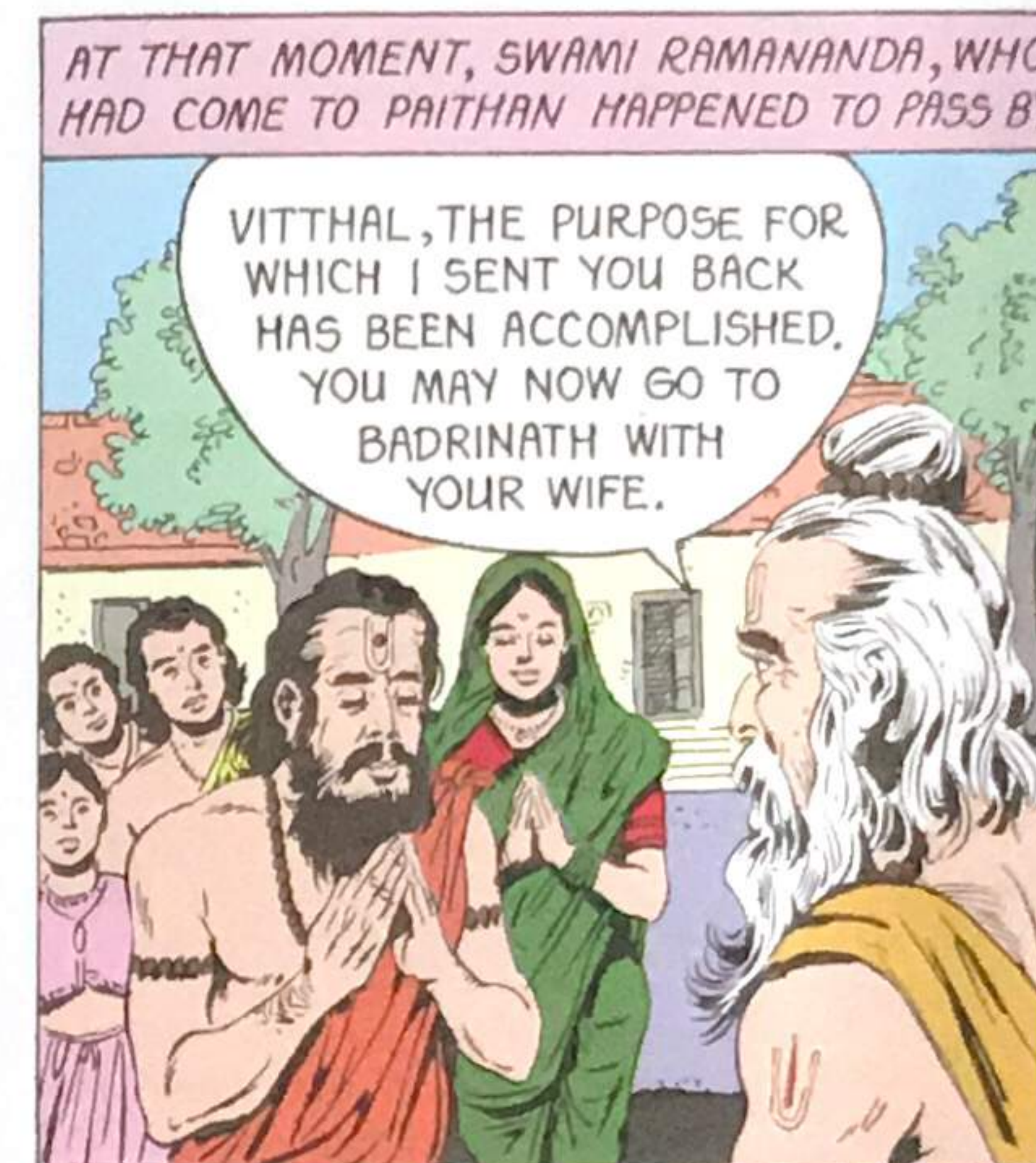
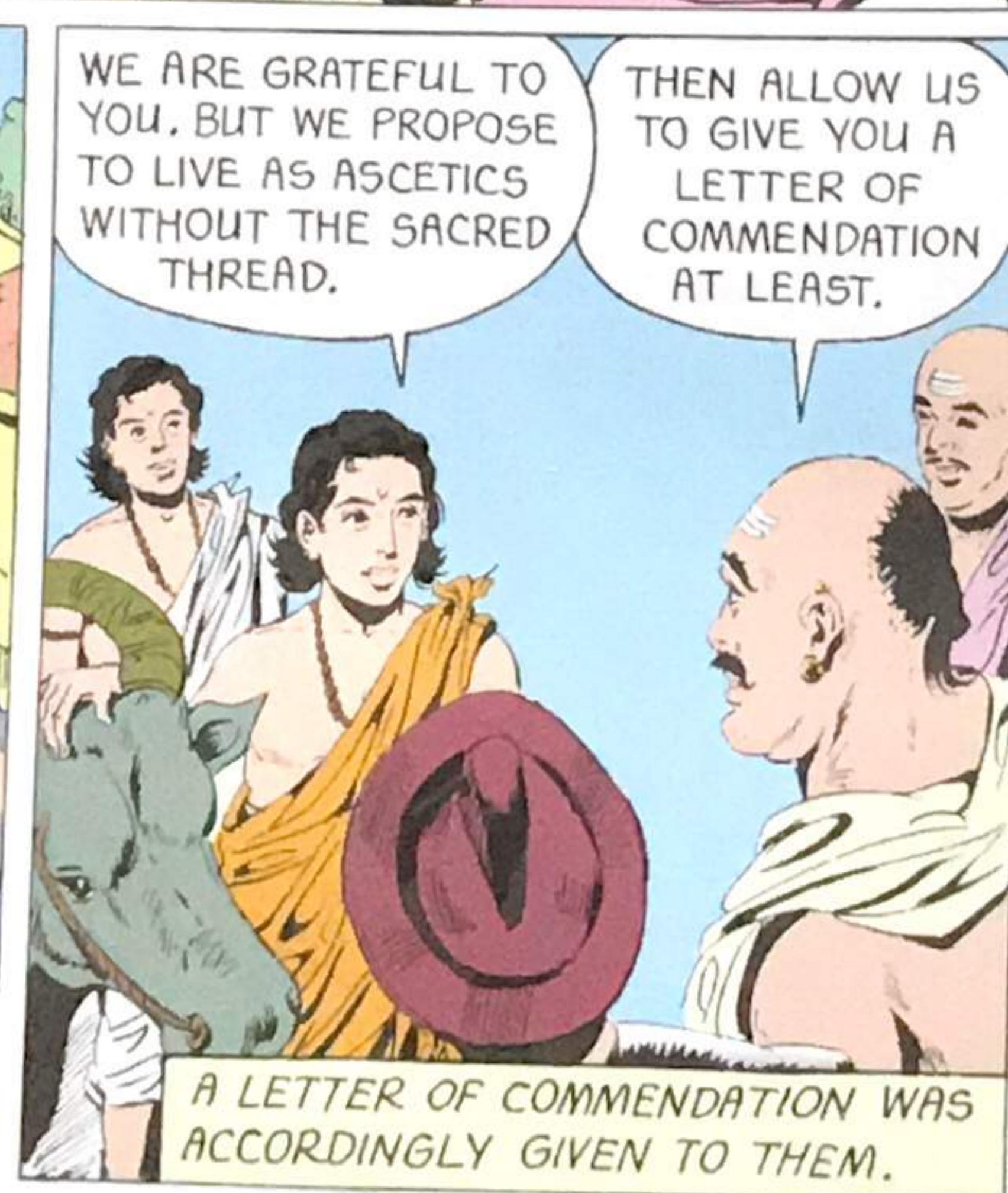
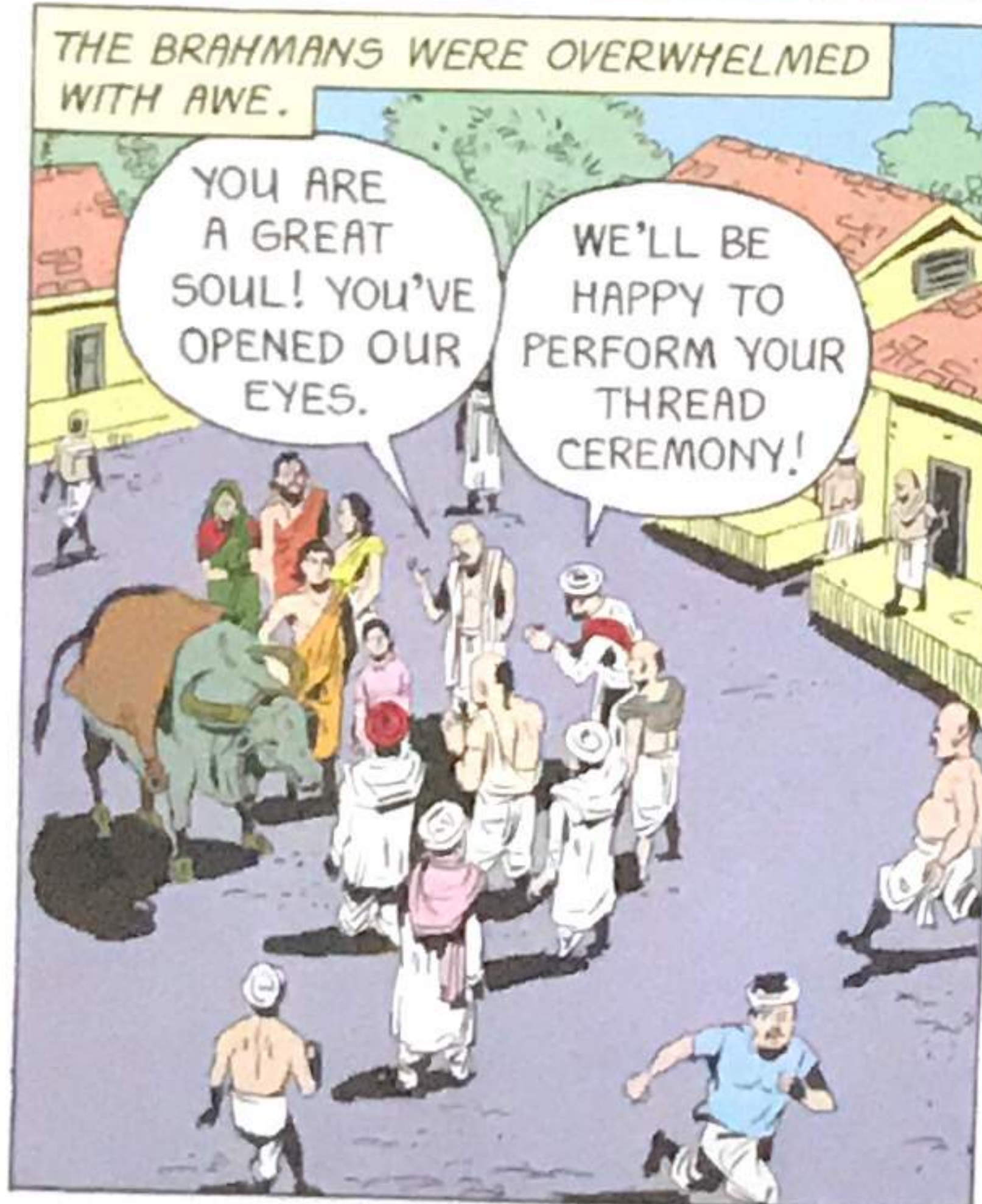
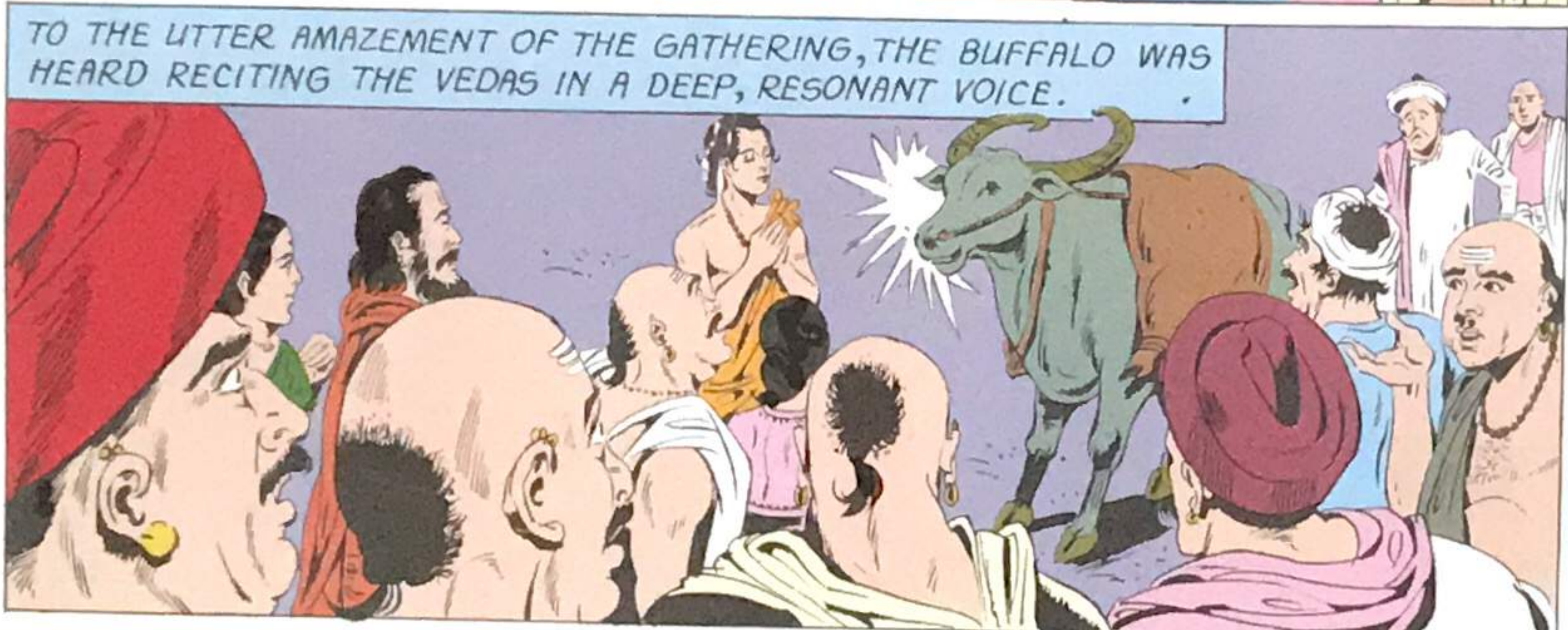
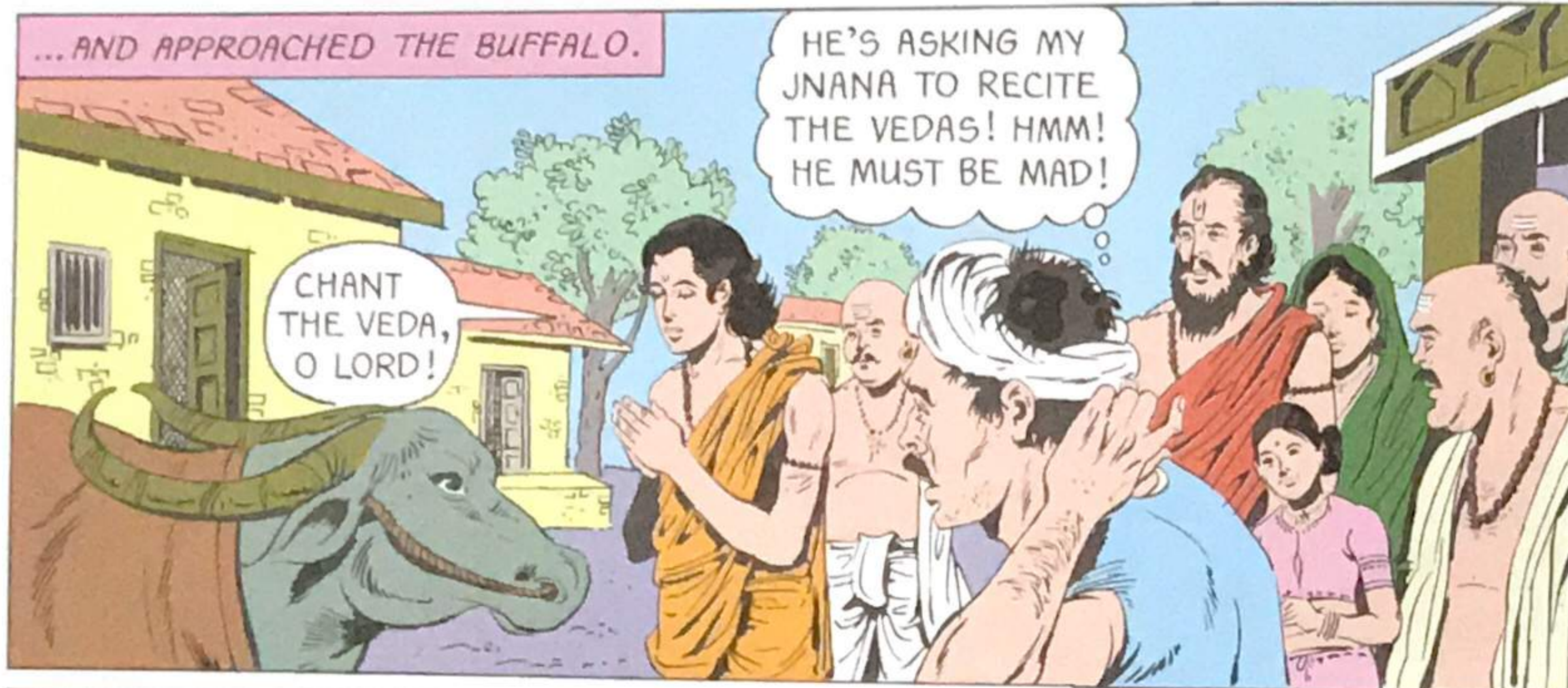


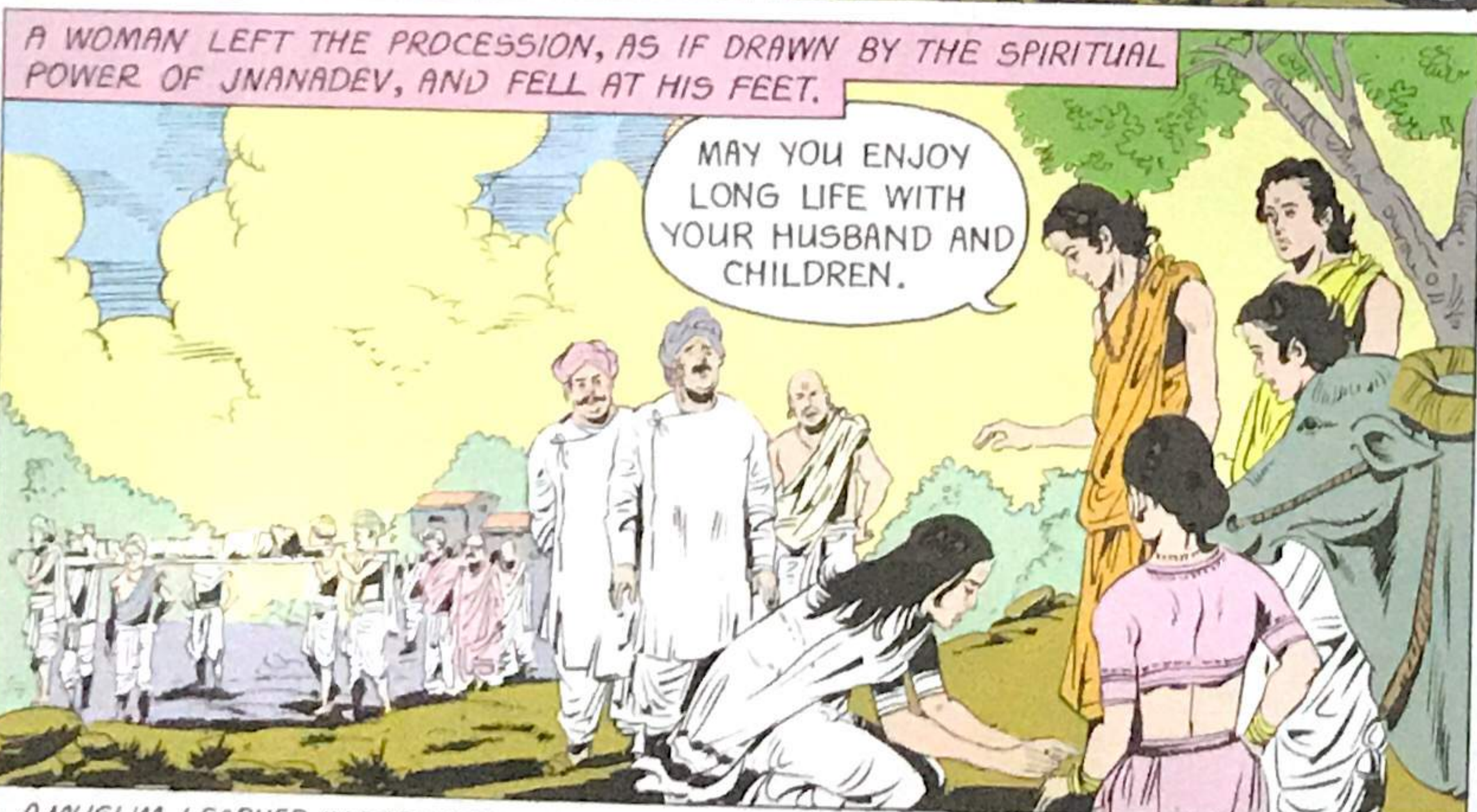
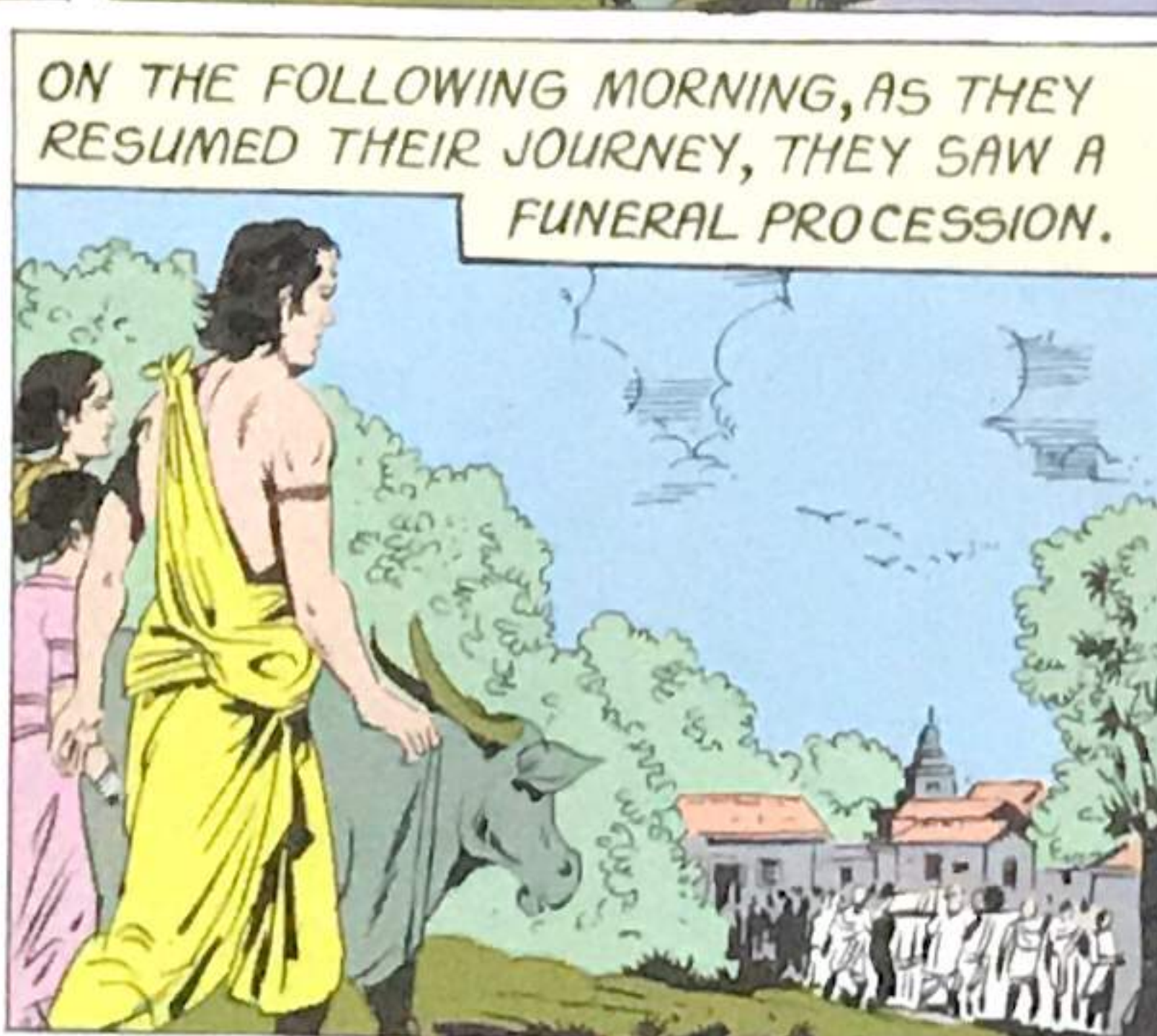
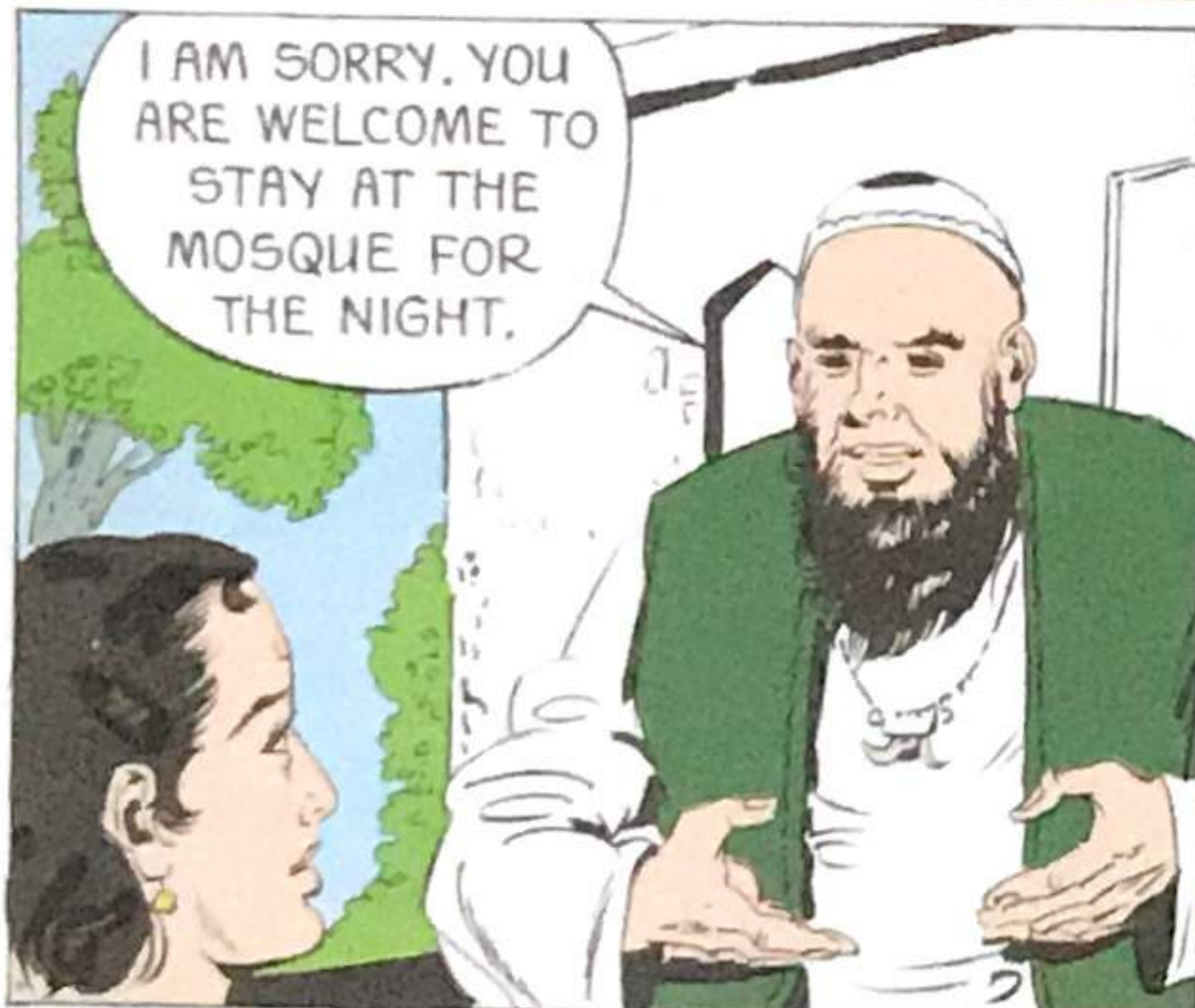
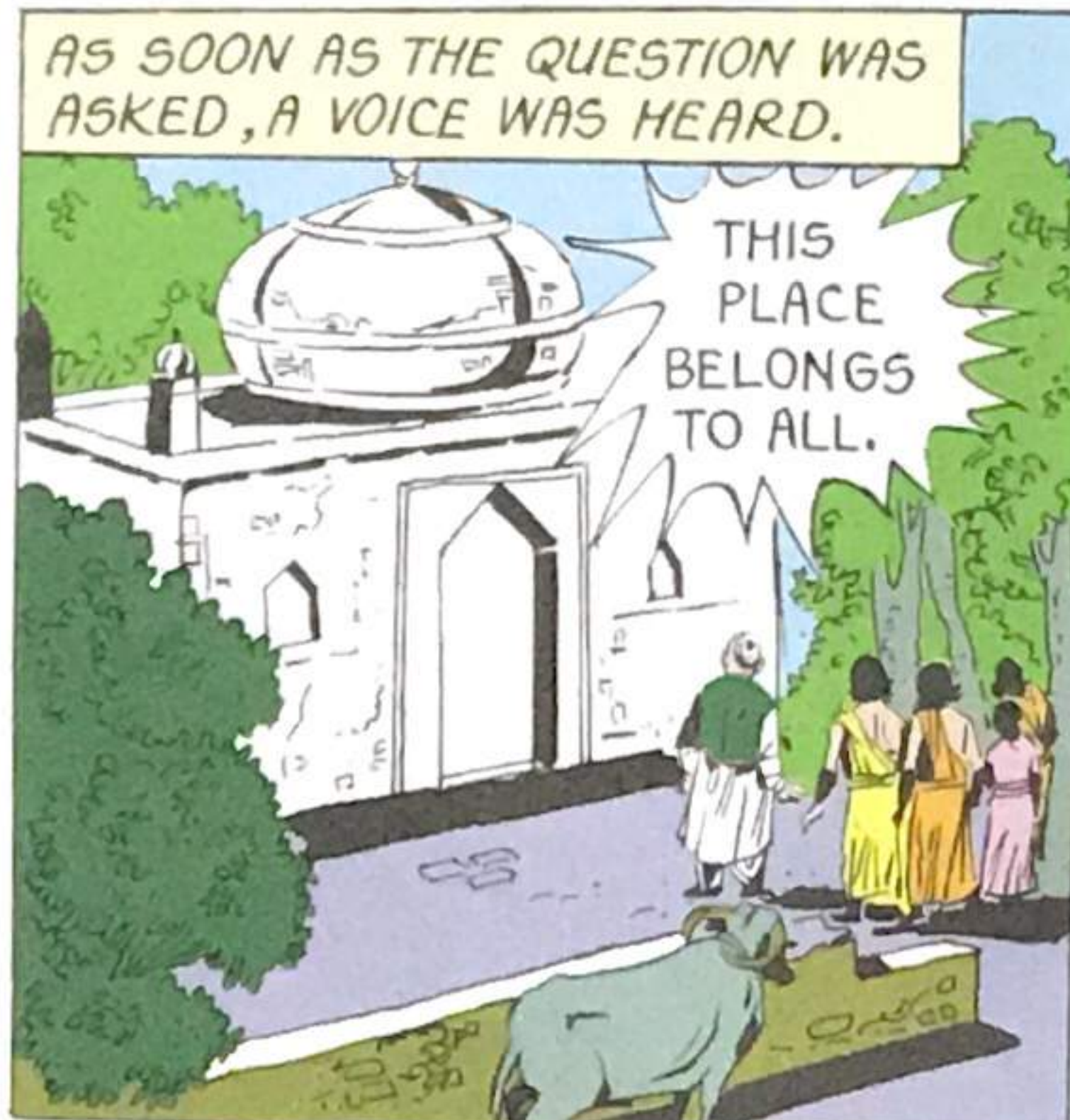
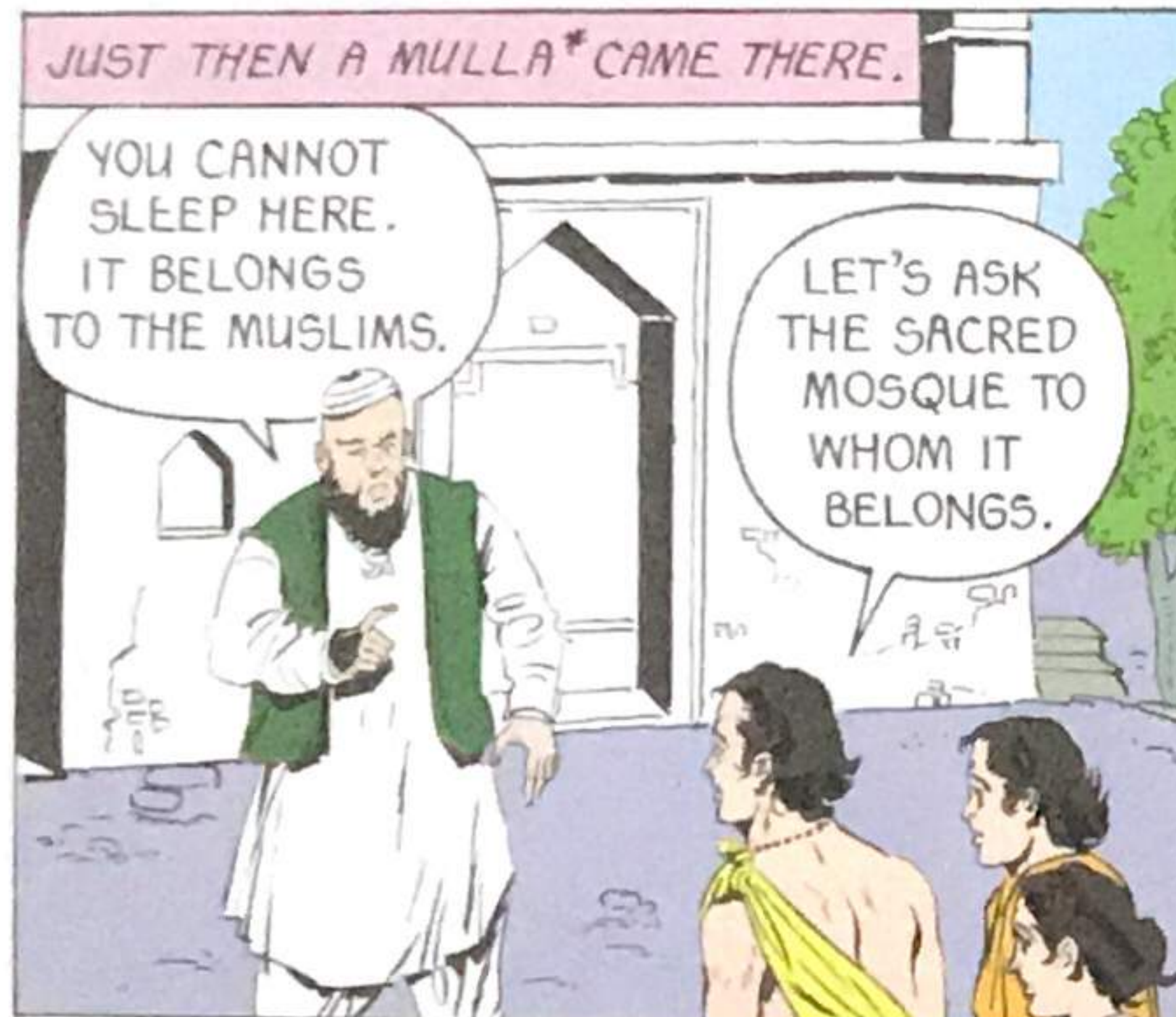
THE SPELL-BOUND BRAHMAN WERE PREPARED TO ADMIT JNANADEV'S GREATNESS BUT A SCEPTIC AMONG THEM STEPPED FORWARD.



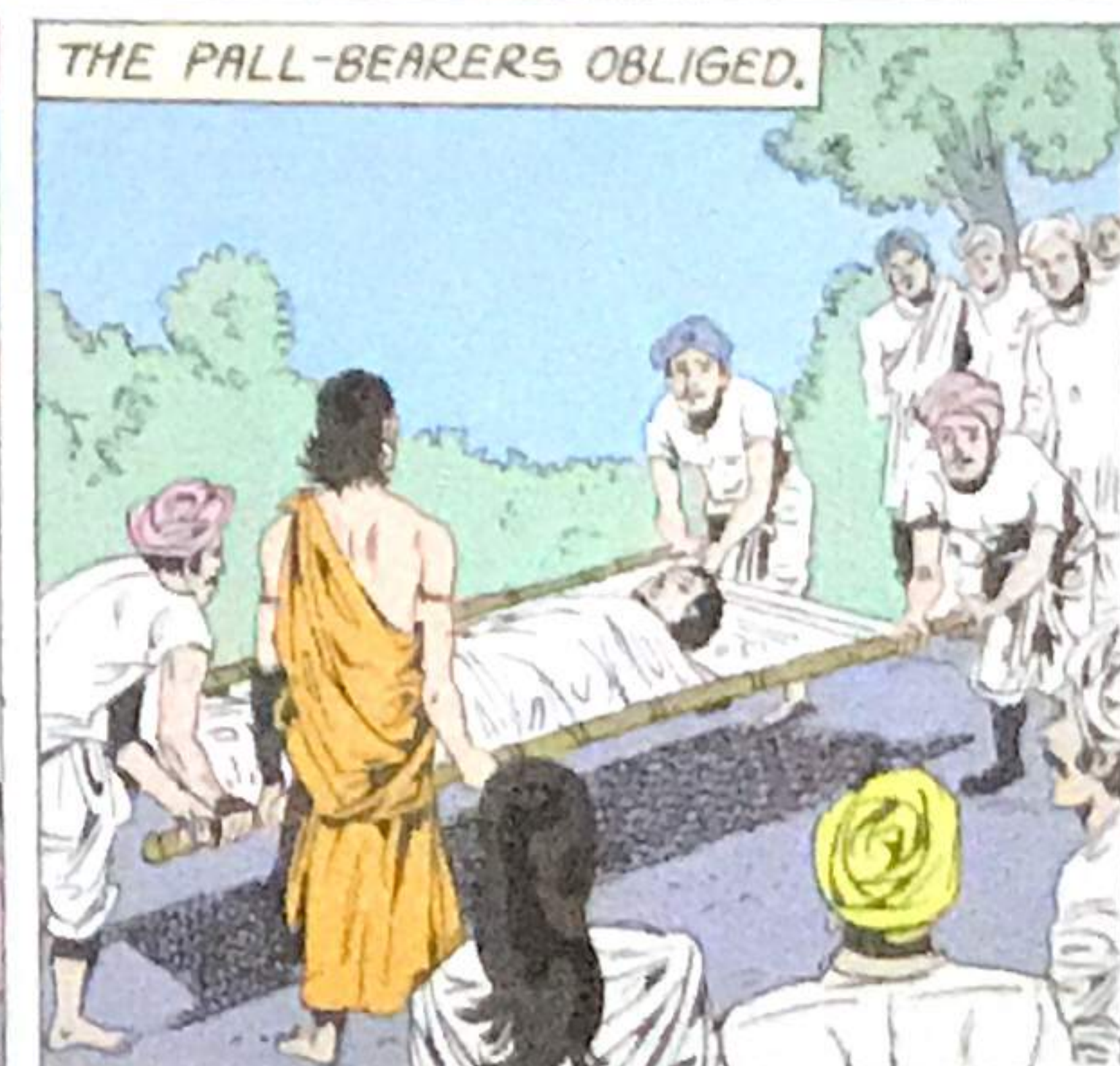
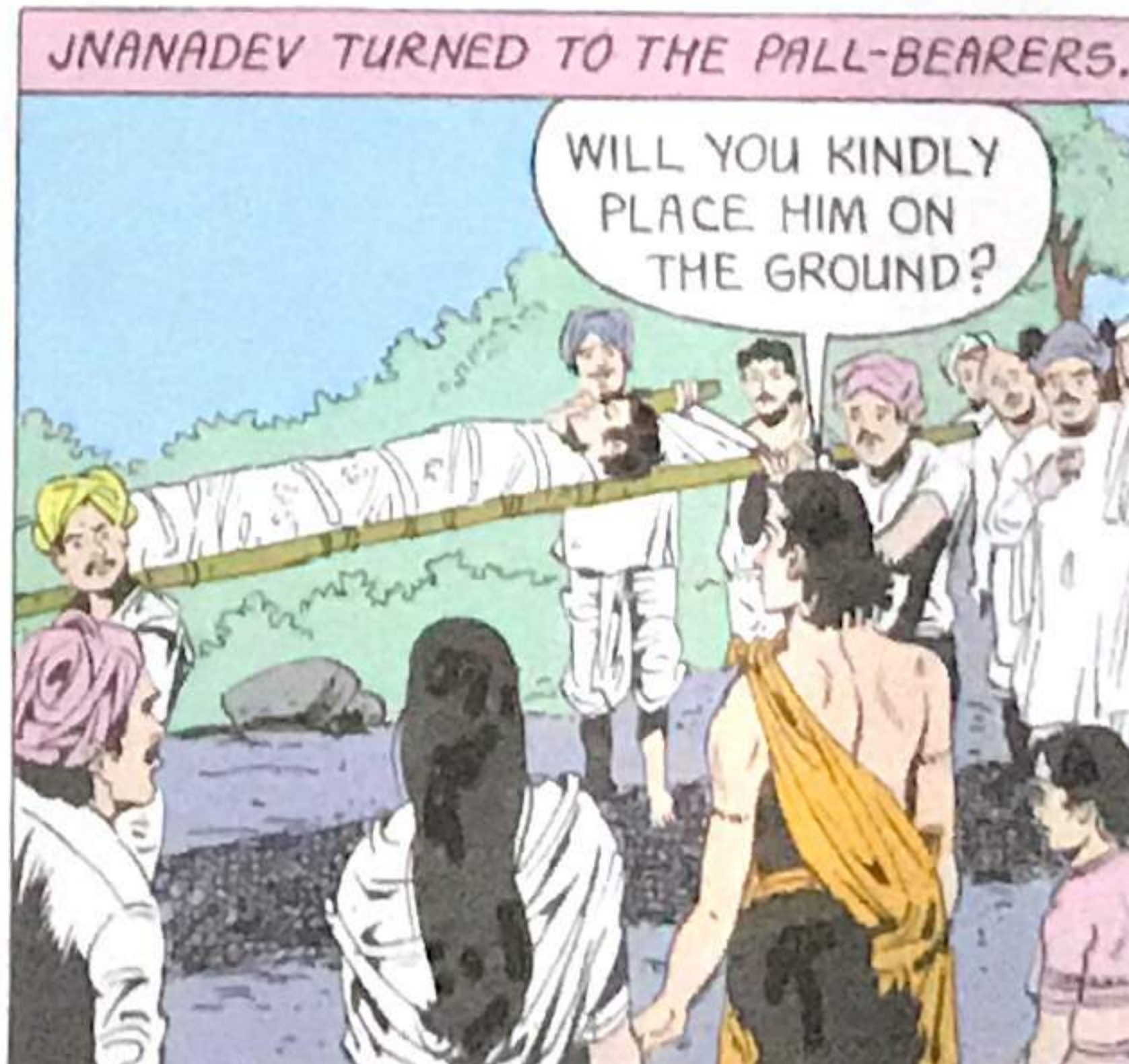
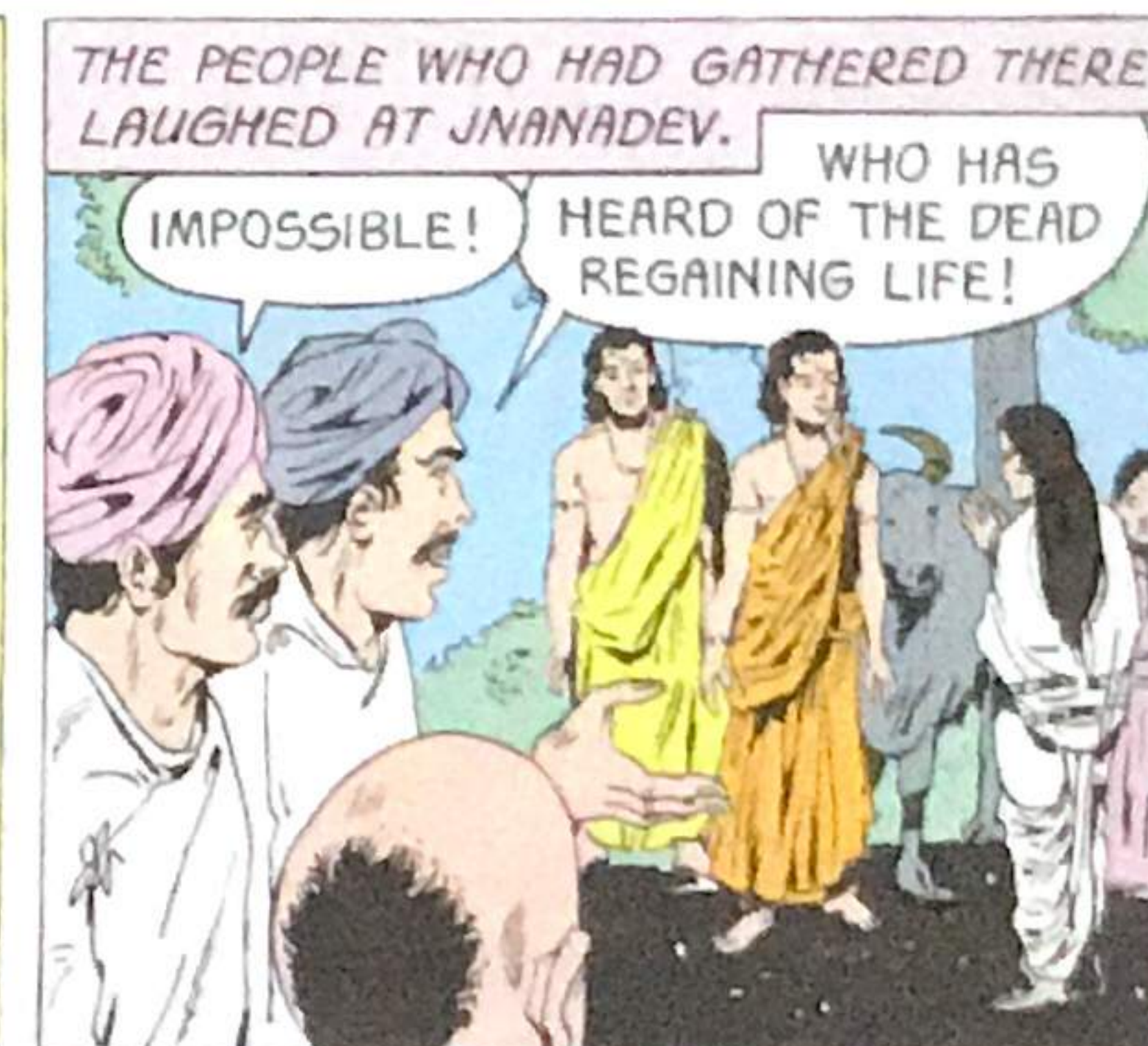
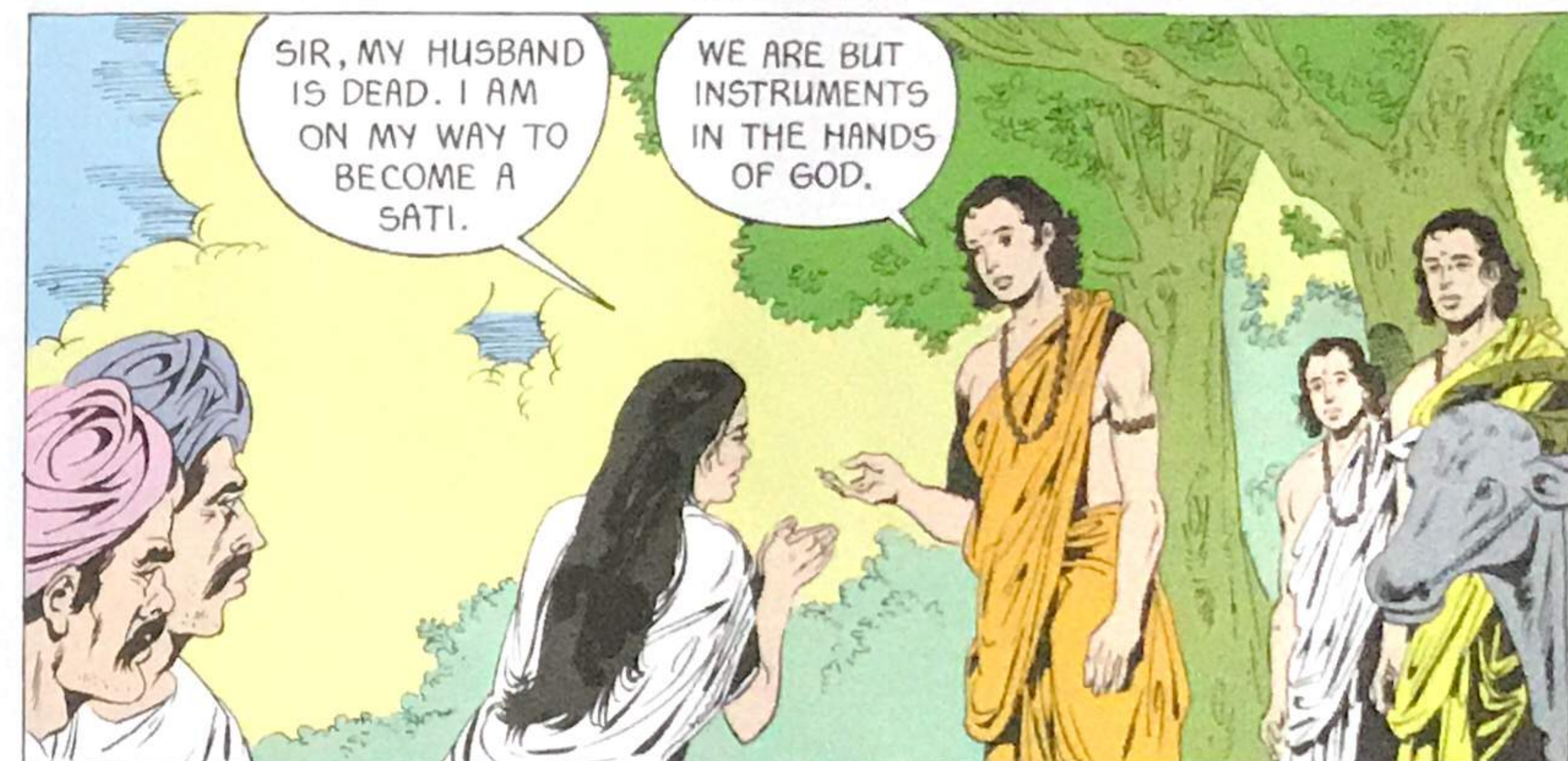
JNANADEV WALKED OUT OF THE HALL...

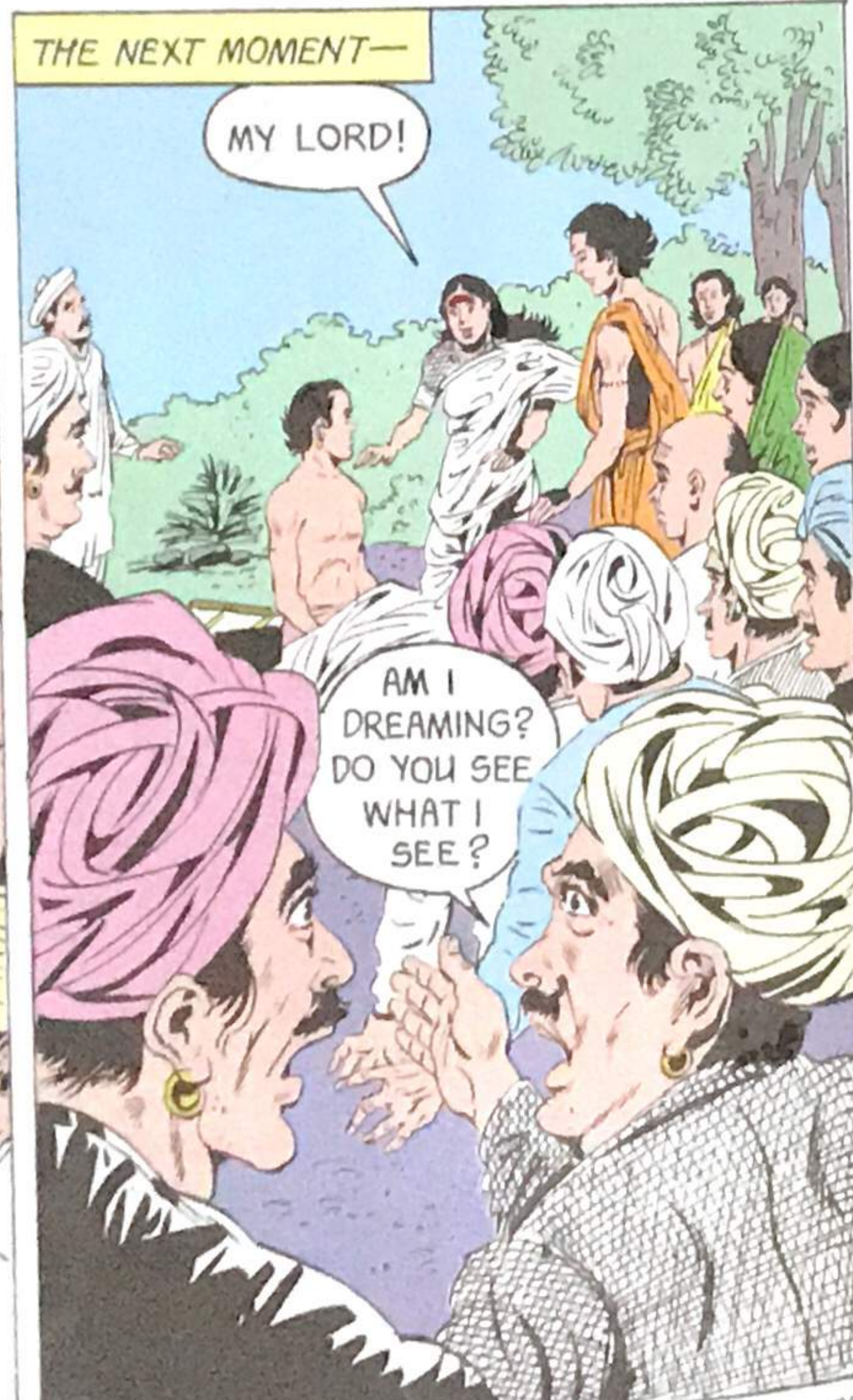




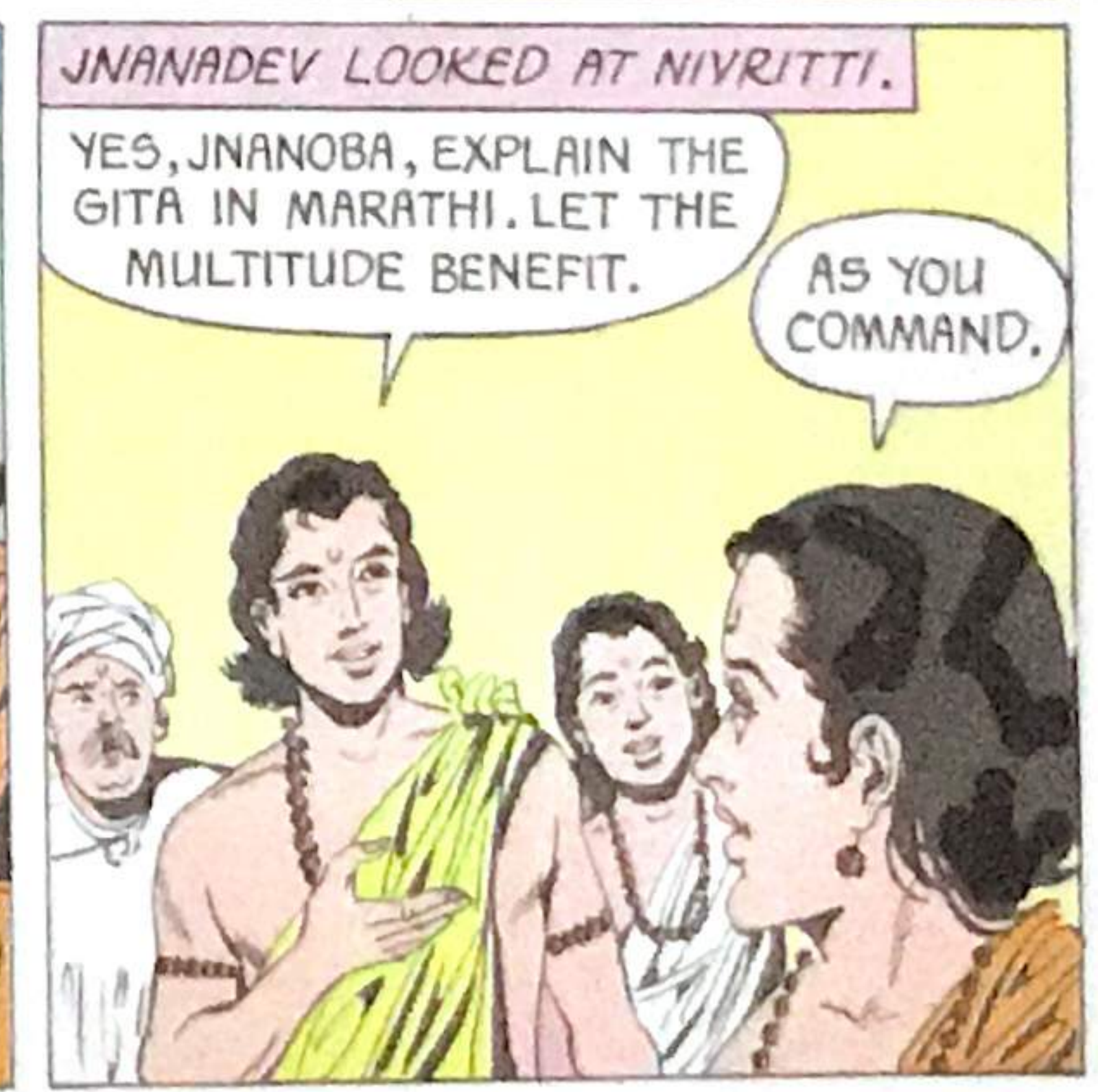
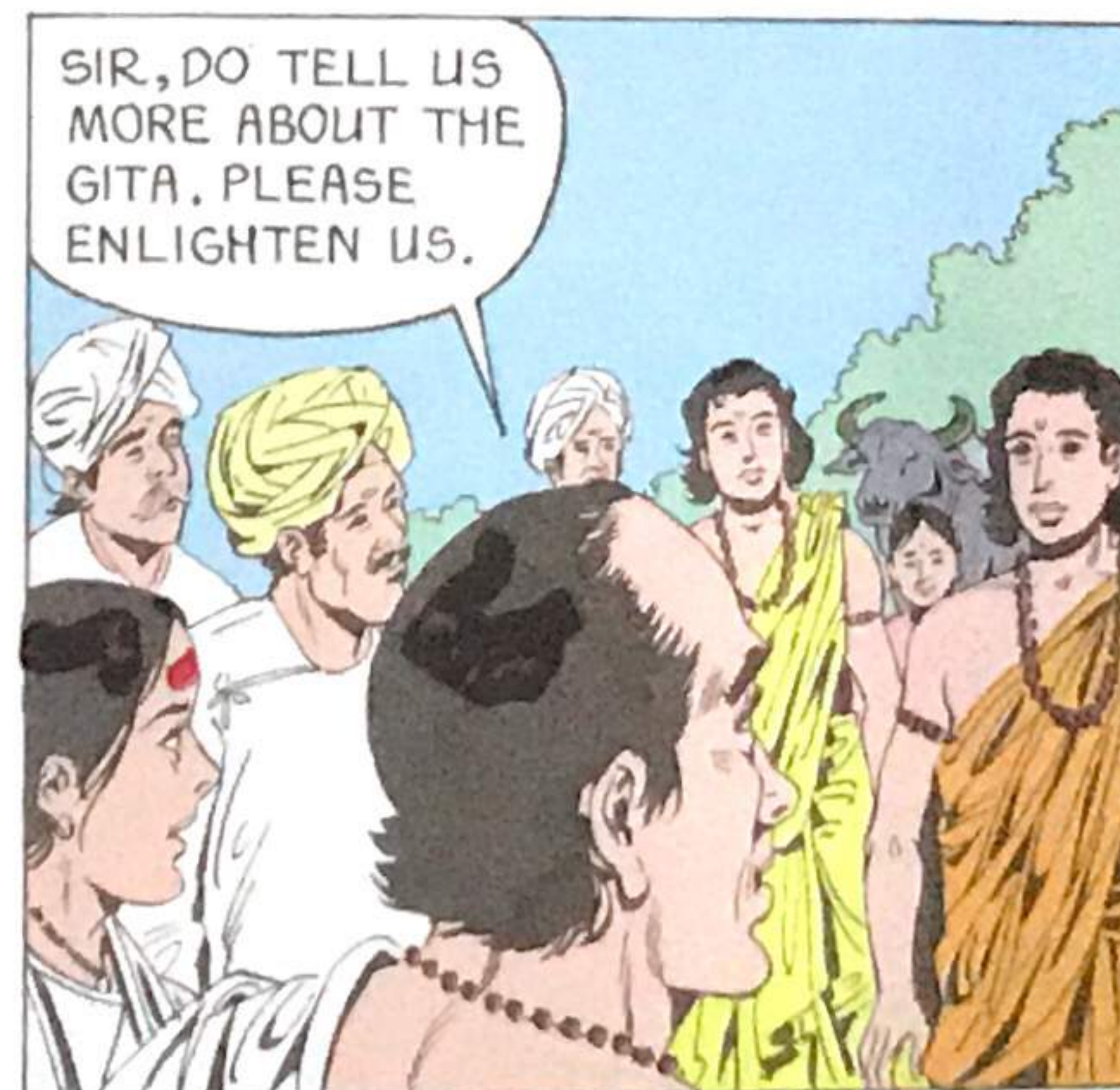
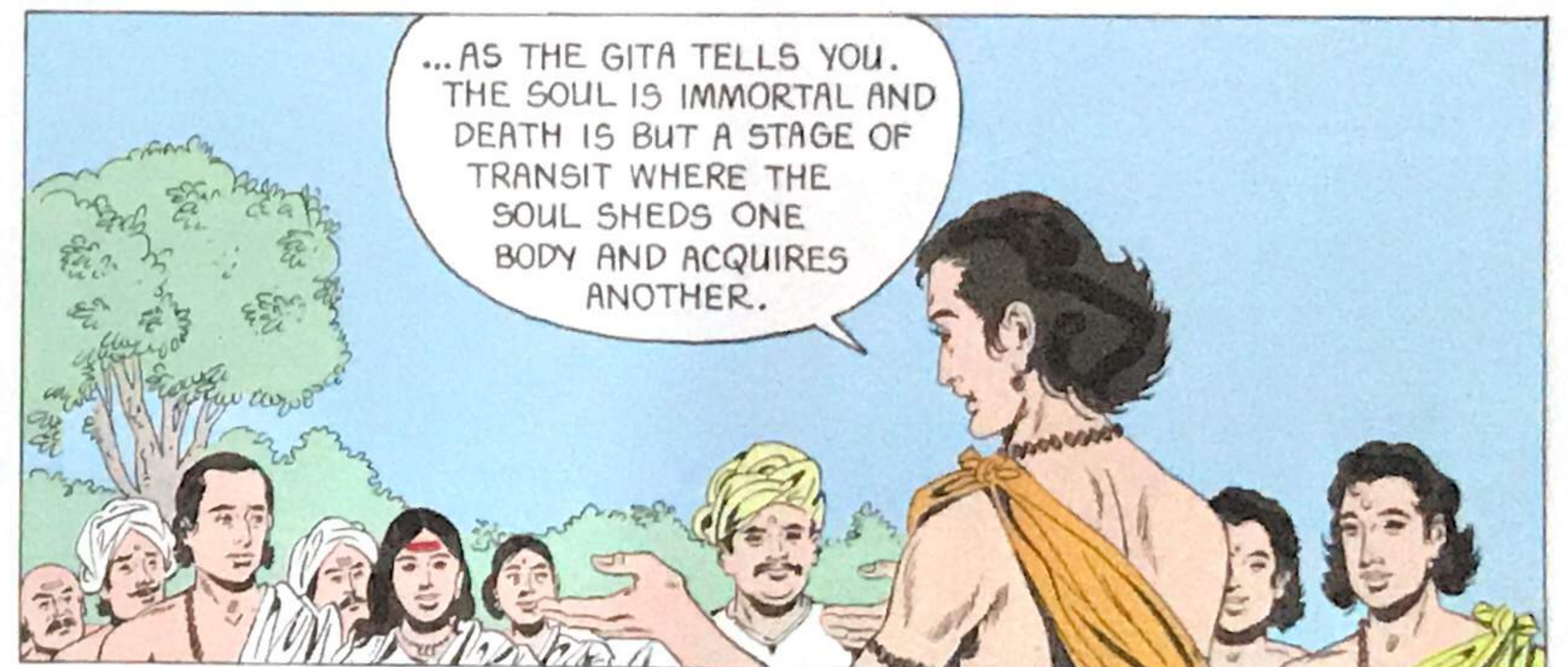
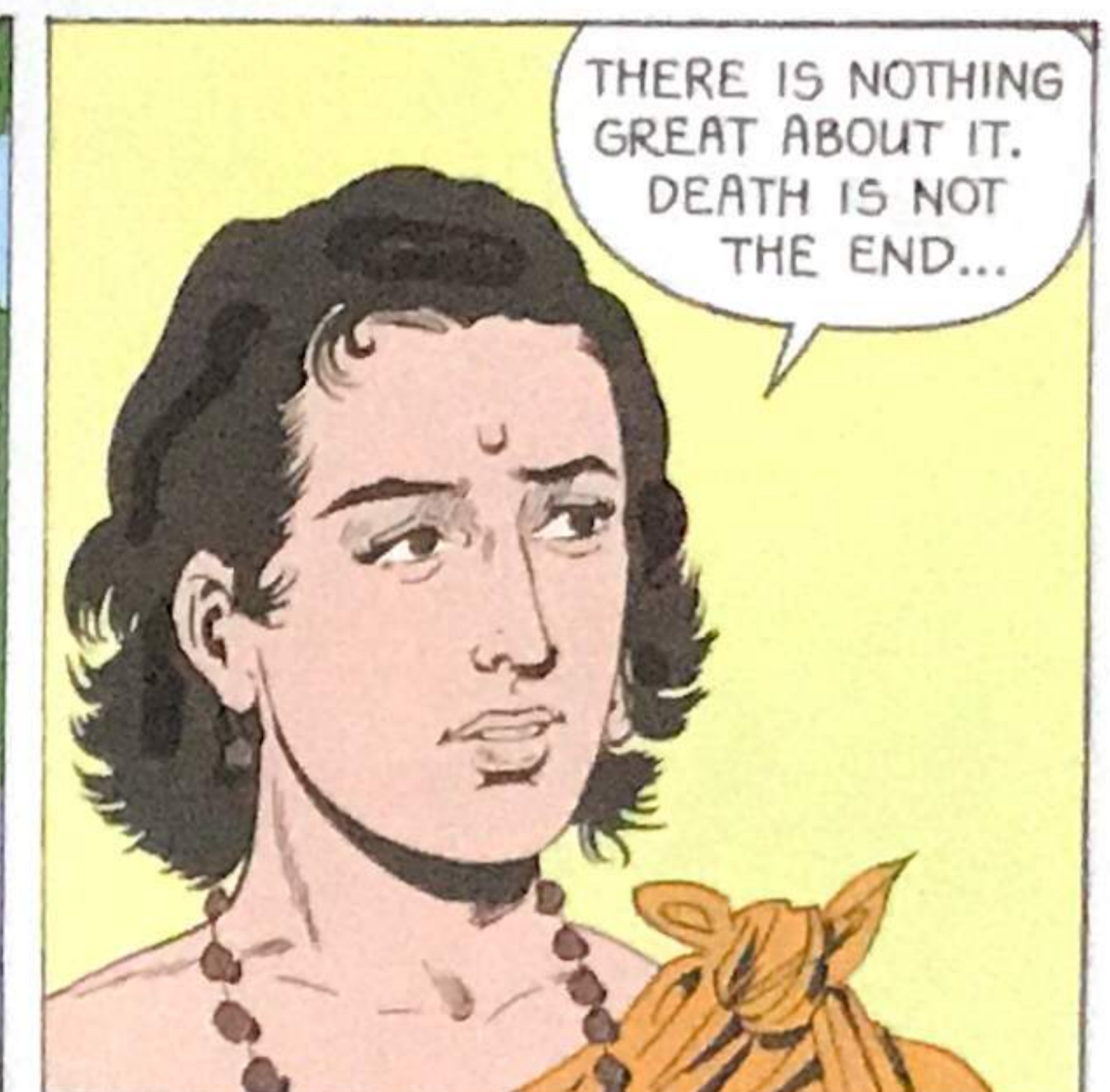
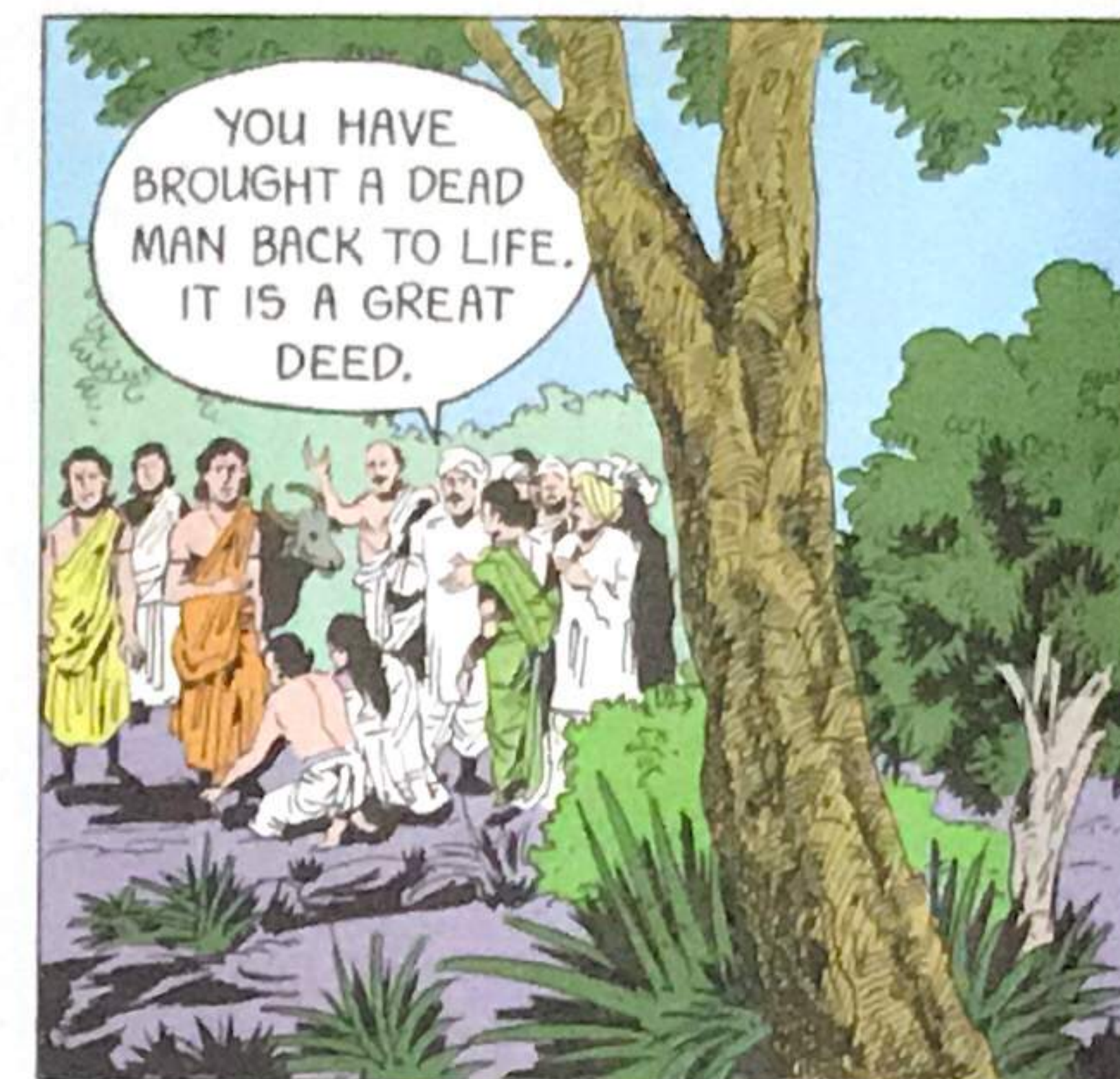


* A MUSLIM, LEARNED IN THEOLOGY.

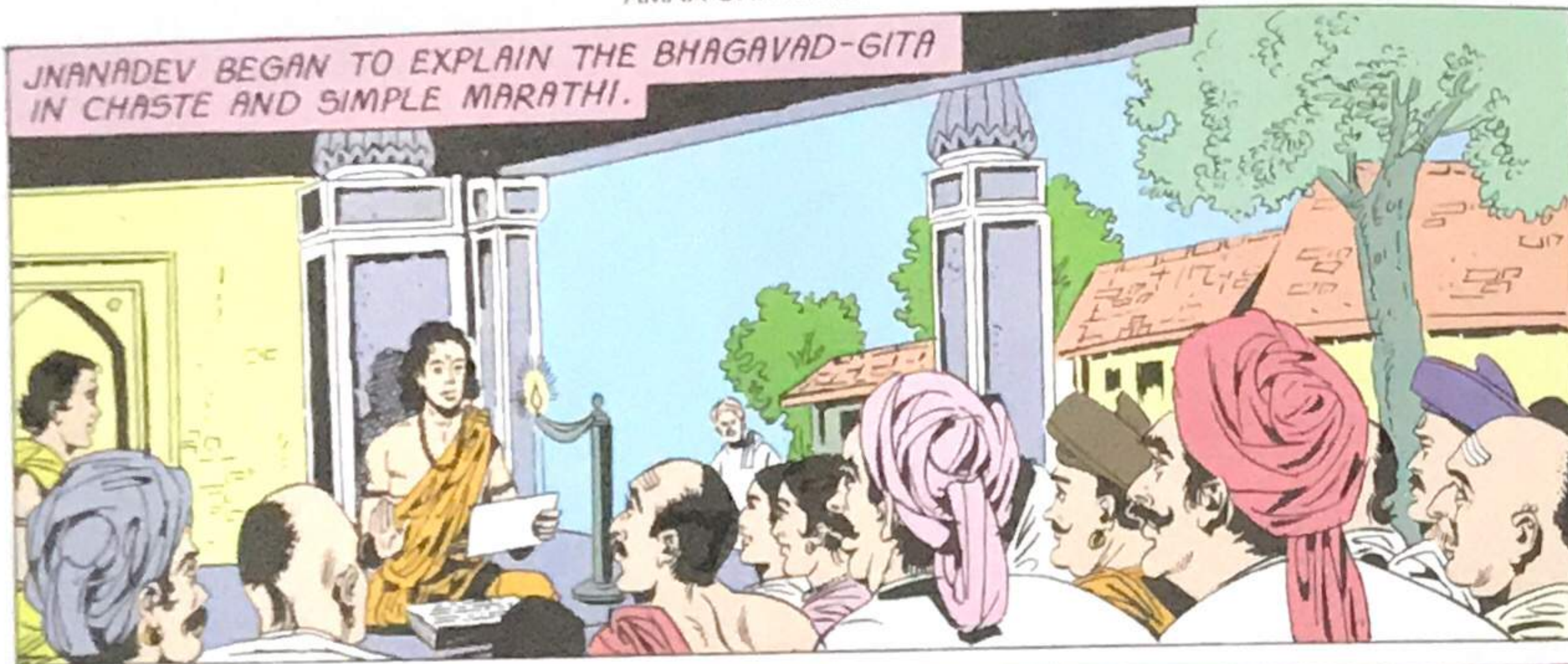




* AN EPITHET OF BRAHMAN, LITERALLY MEANS TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE AND BLISS



JNANADEV BEGAN TO EXPLAIN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA IN CHASTE AND SIMPLE MARATHI.



IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, PEOPLE FLOCKED IN LARGE NUMBERS TO LISTEN TO HIS EXPOSITION OF THE GITA.



AFTER COMPLETING HIS EXPOSITION OF THE GITA, JNANADEV LEFT WITH THE OTHERS FOR ALANDI.



ON THE WAY, THE BUFFALO, JNANA, BREATHED ITS LAST AND WAS BURIED.

WHEN THEY REACHED ALANDI, THEY WERE GIVEN A ROUSING WELCOME.

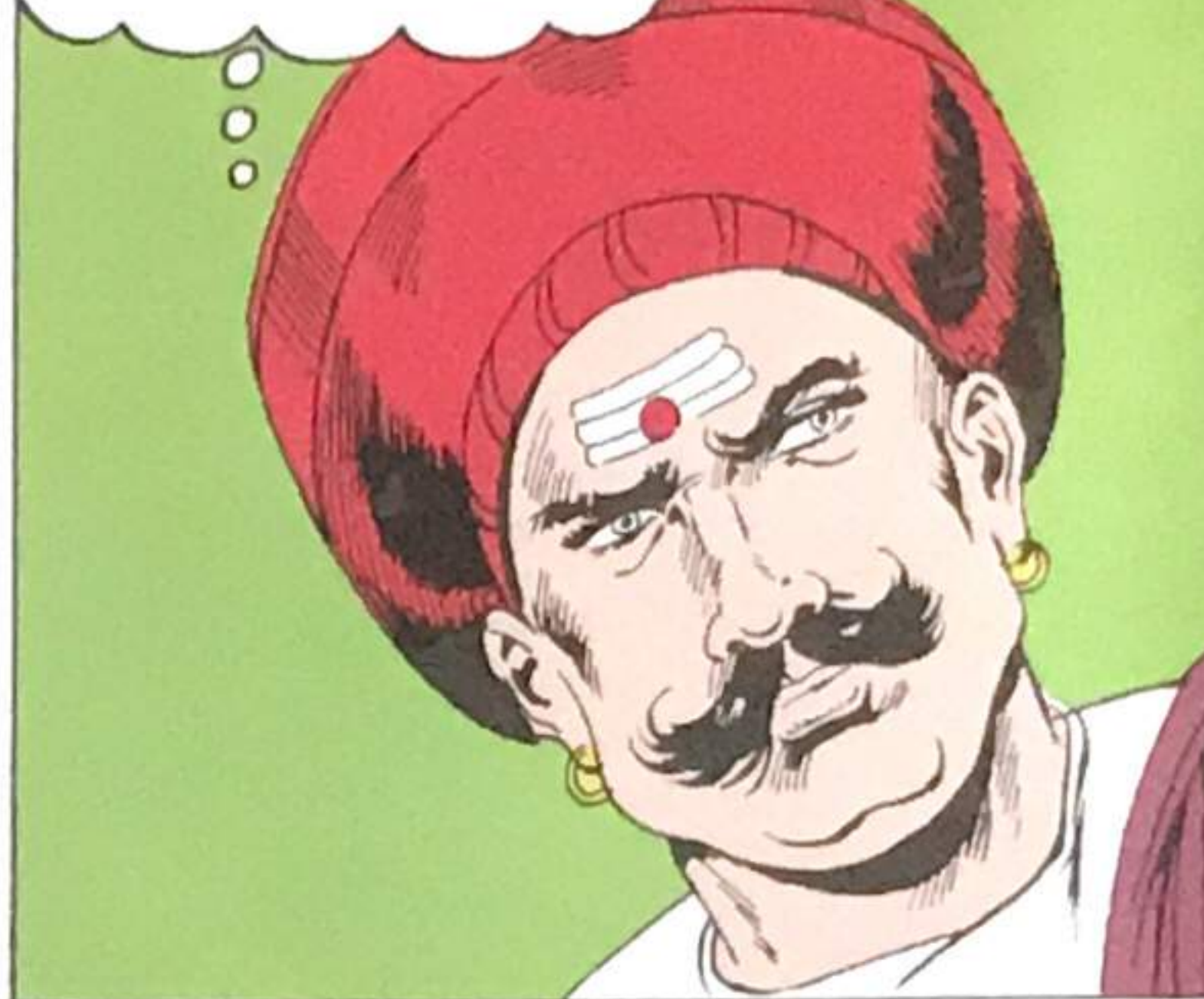


PEOPLE VIED WITH ONE ANOTHER TO BECOME JNANADEV'S DISCIPLES.

*KNOWN TODAY AS THE JNANESHWARI

THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS BLIND TO THE GREATNESS OF JNANADEV WAS A BRAHMAN NAMED VISOBA.

AN OUTCASTE RECEIVING HOMAGE FROM BRAHMANS! IT'S OUTRAGEOUS!

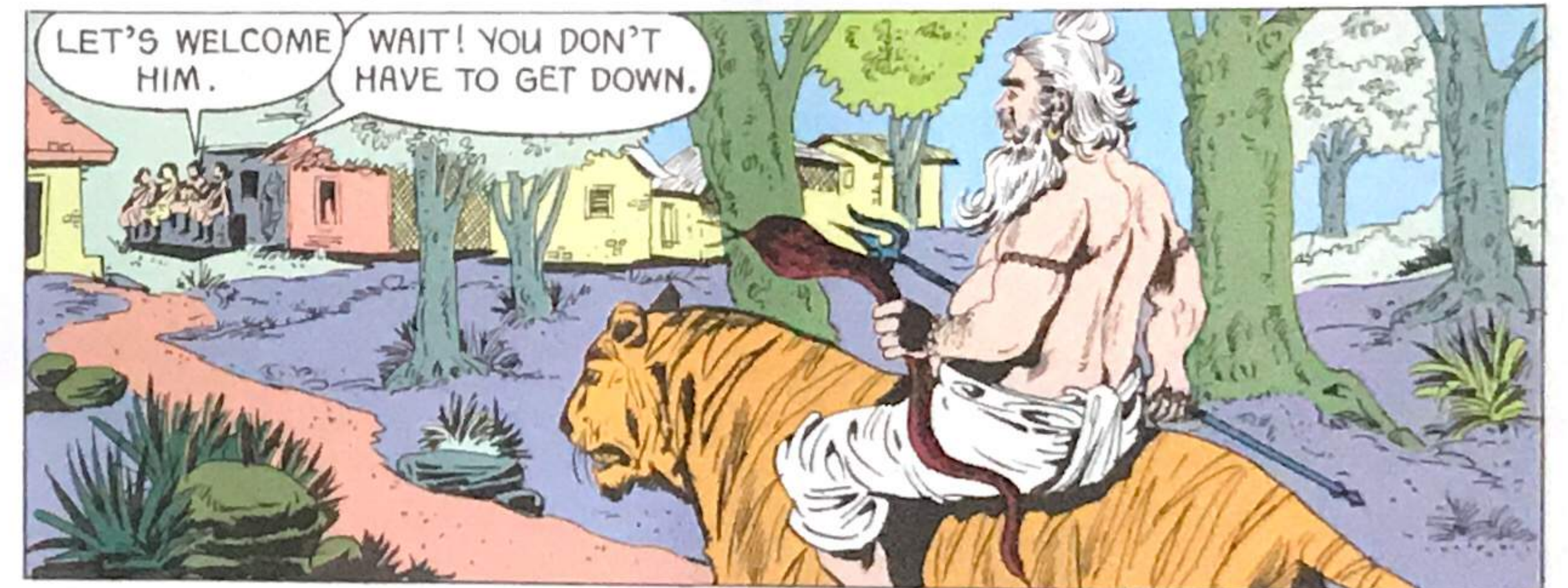
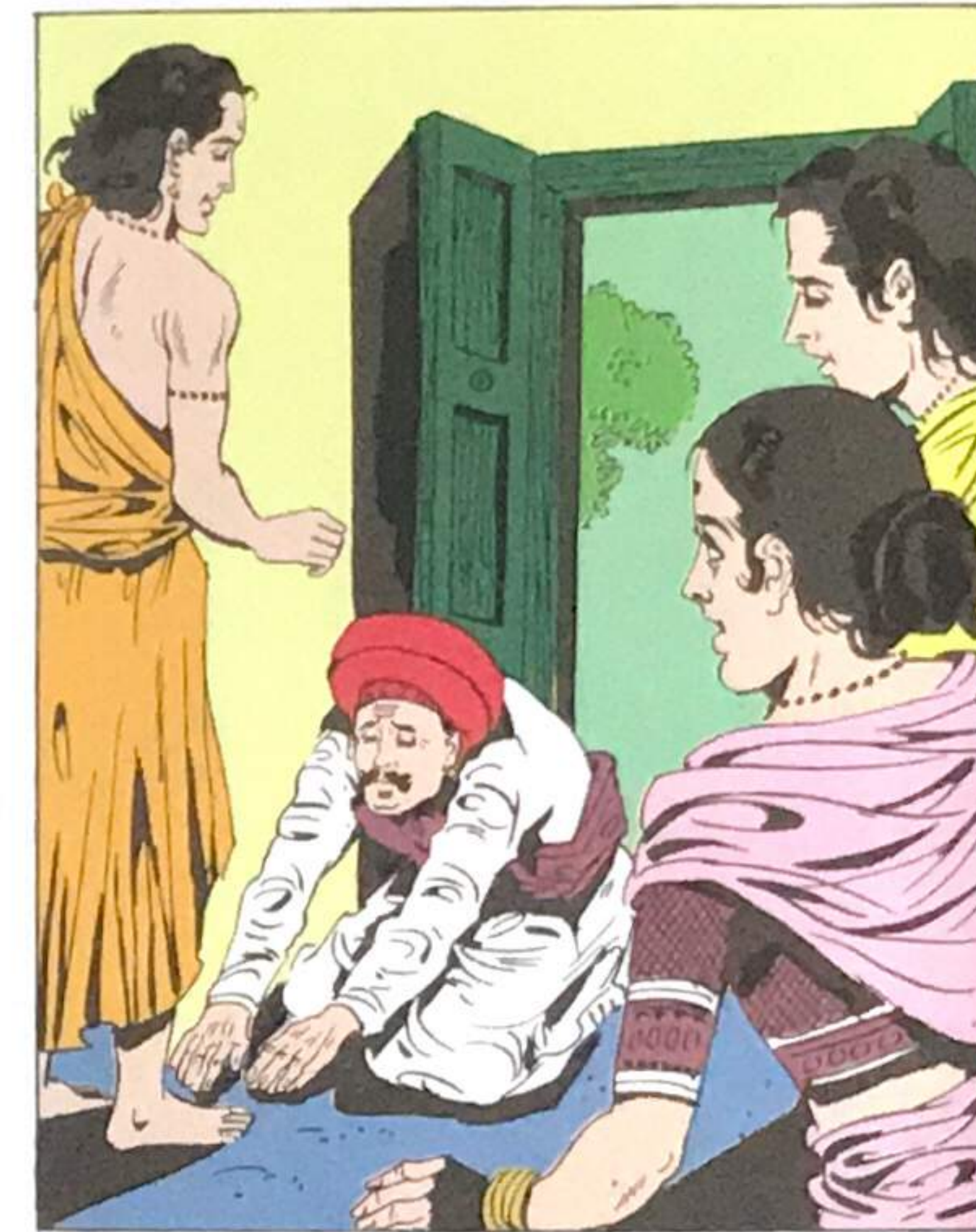
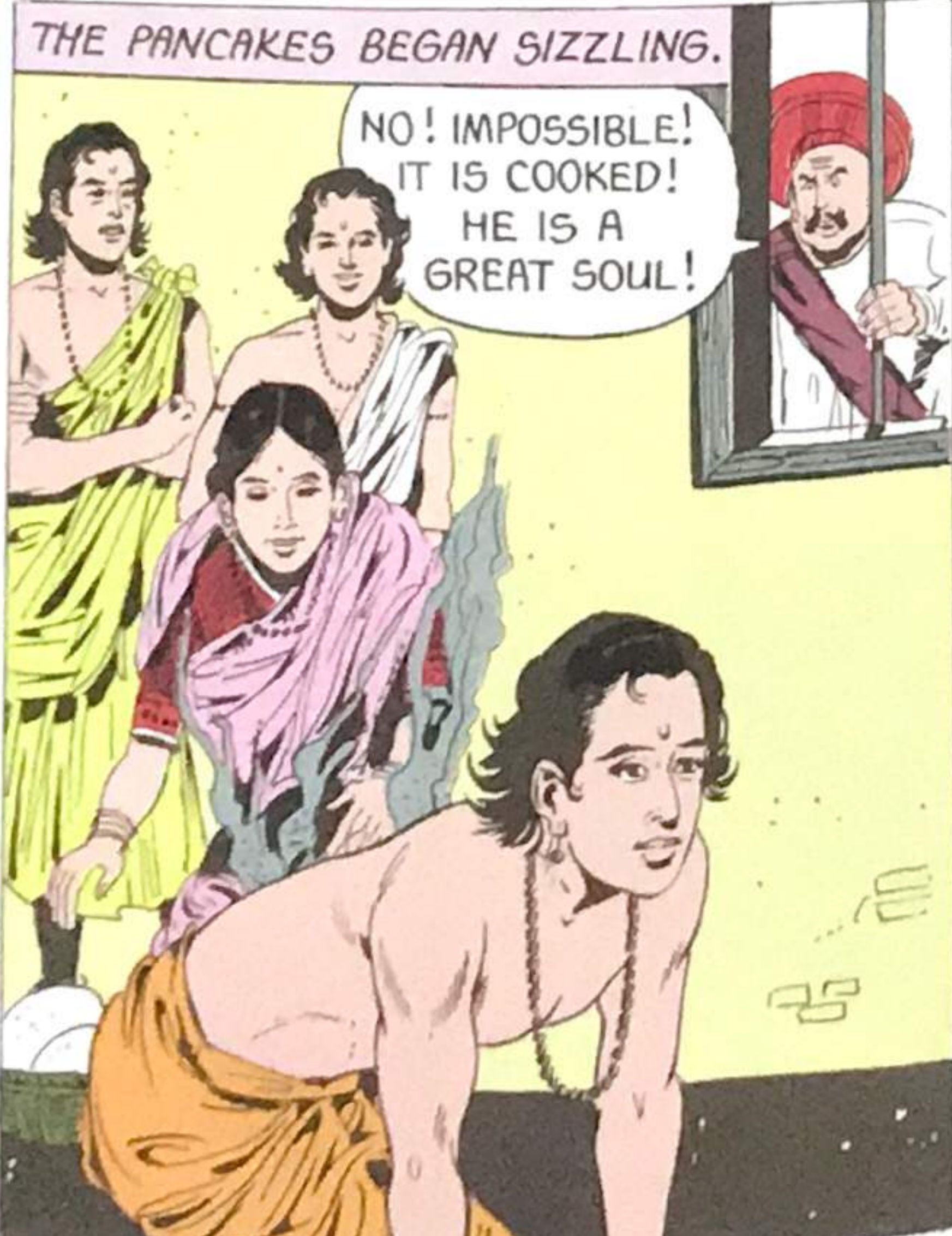
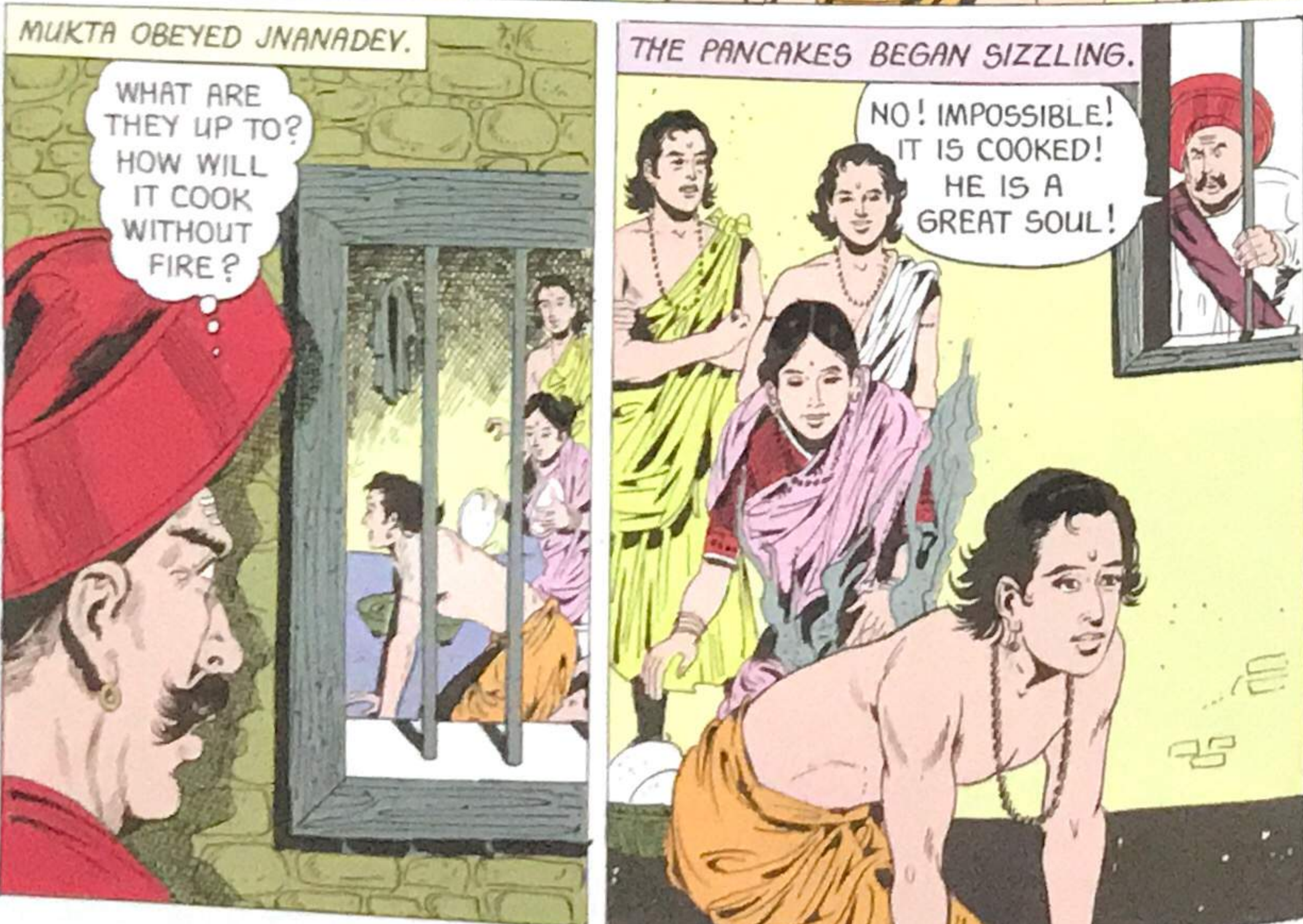
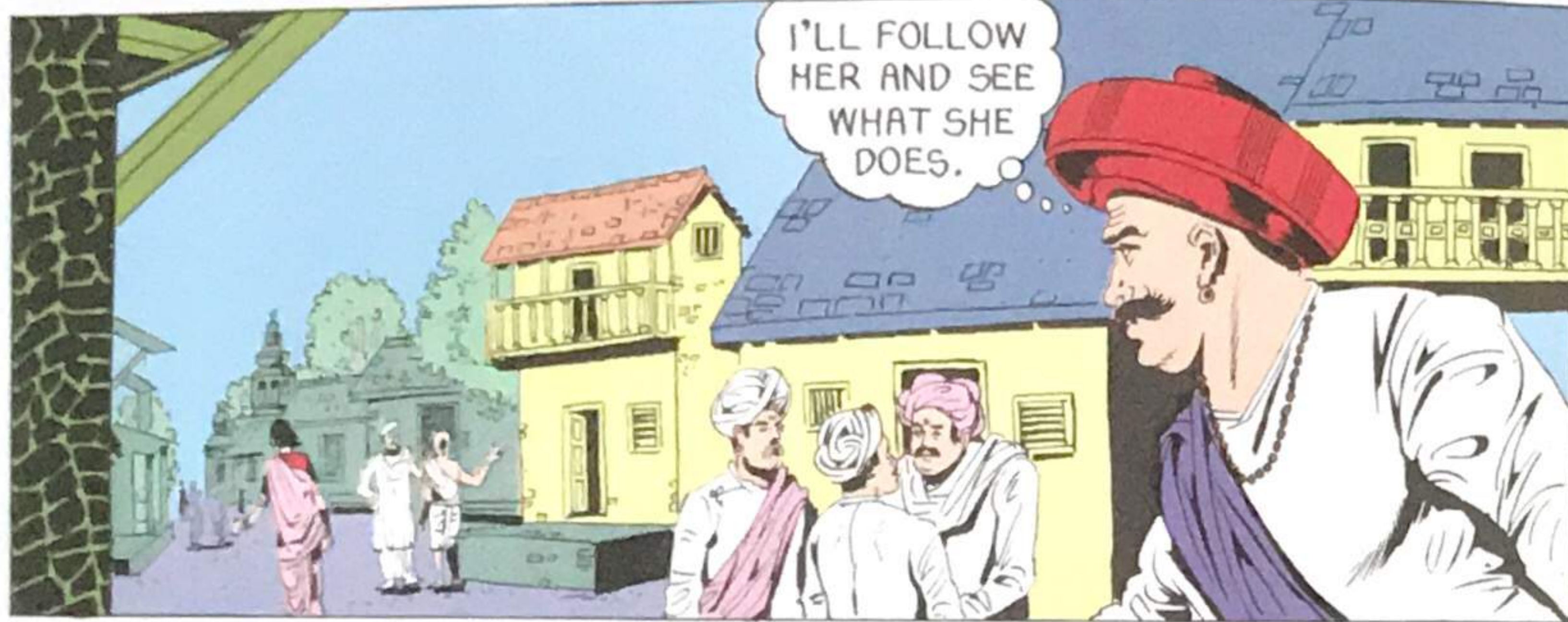


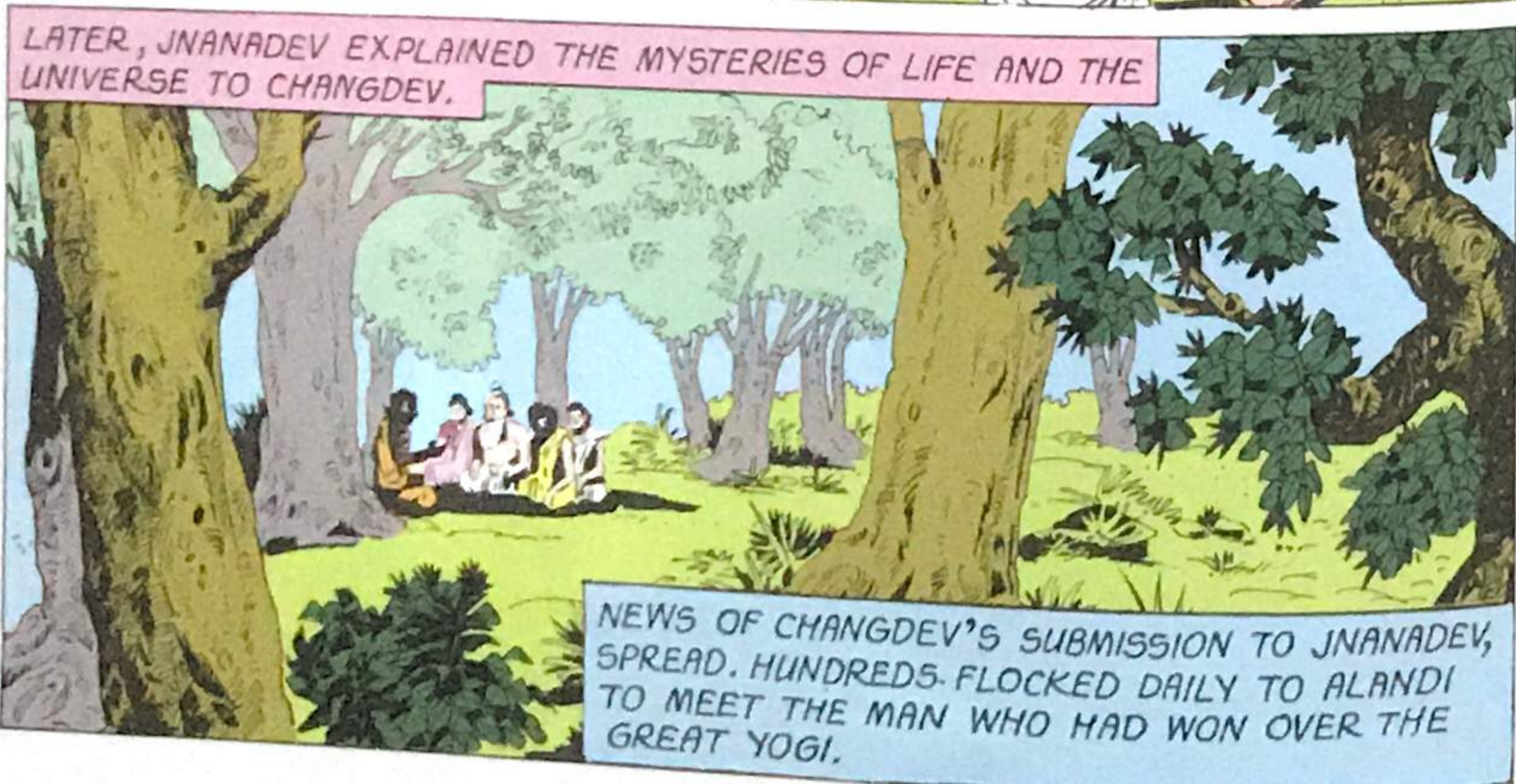
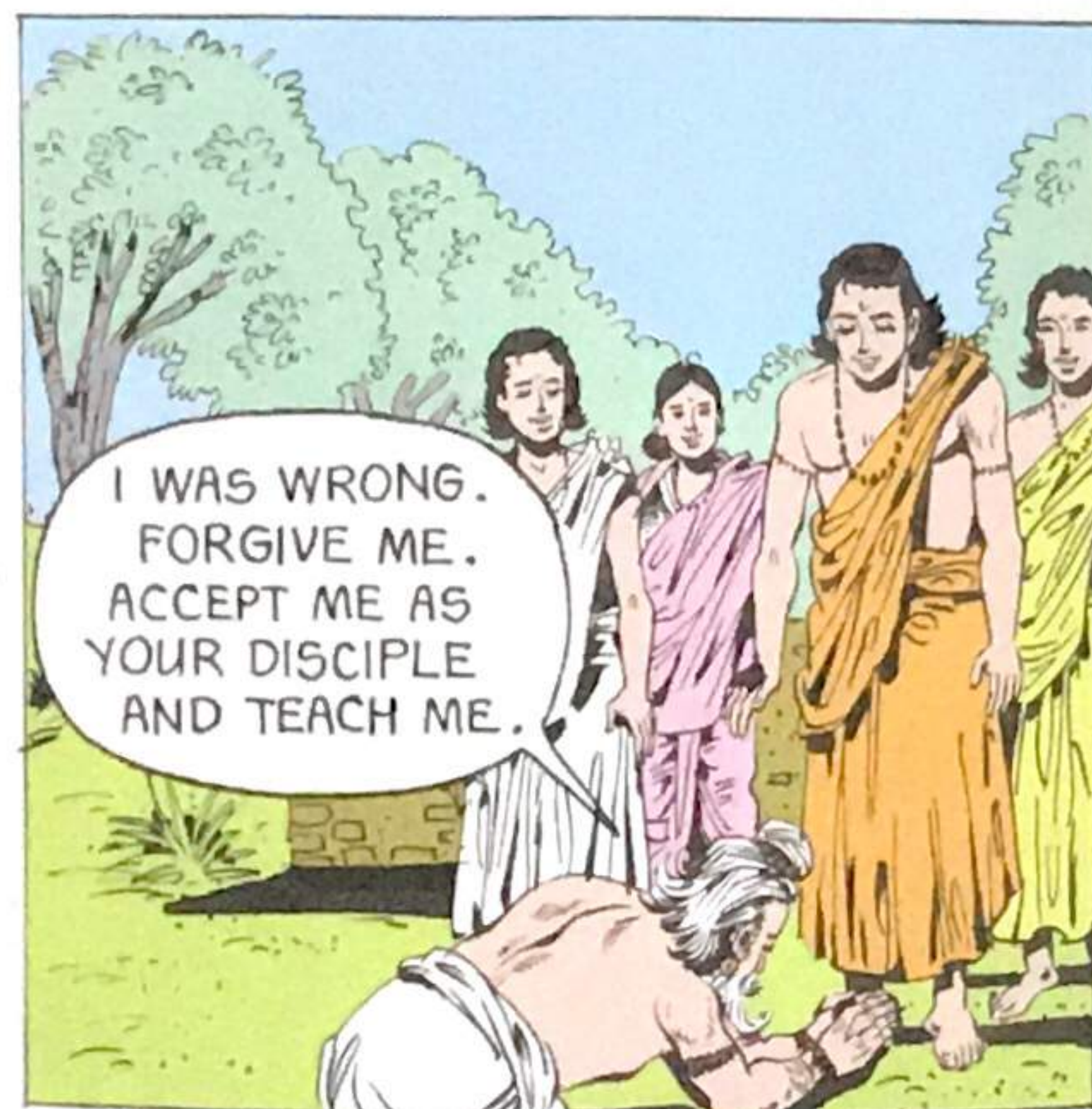
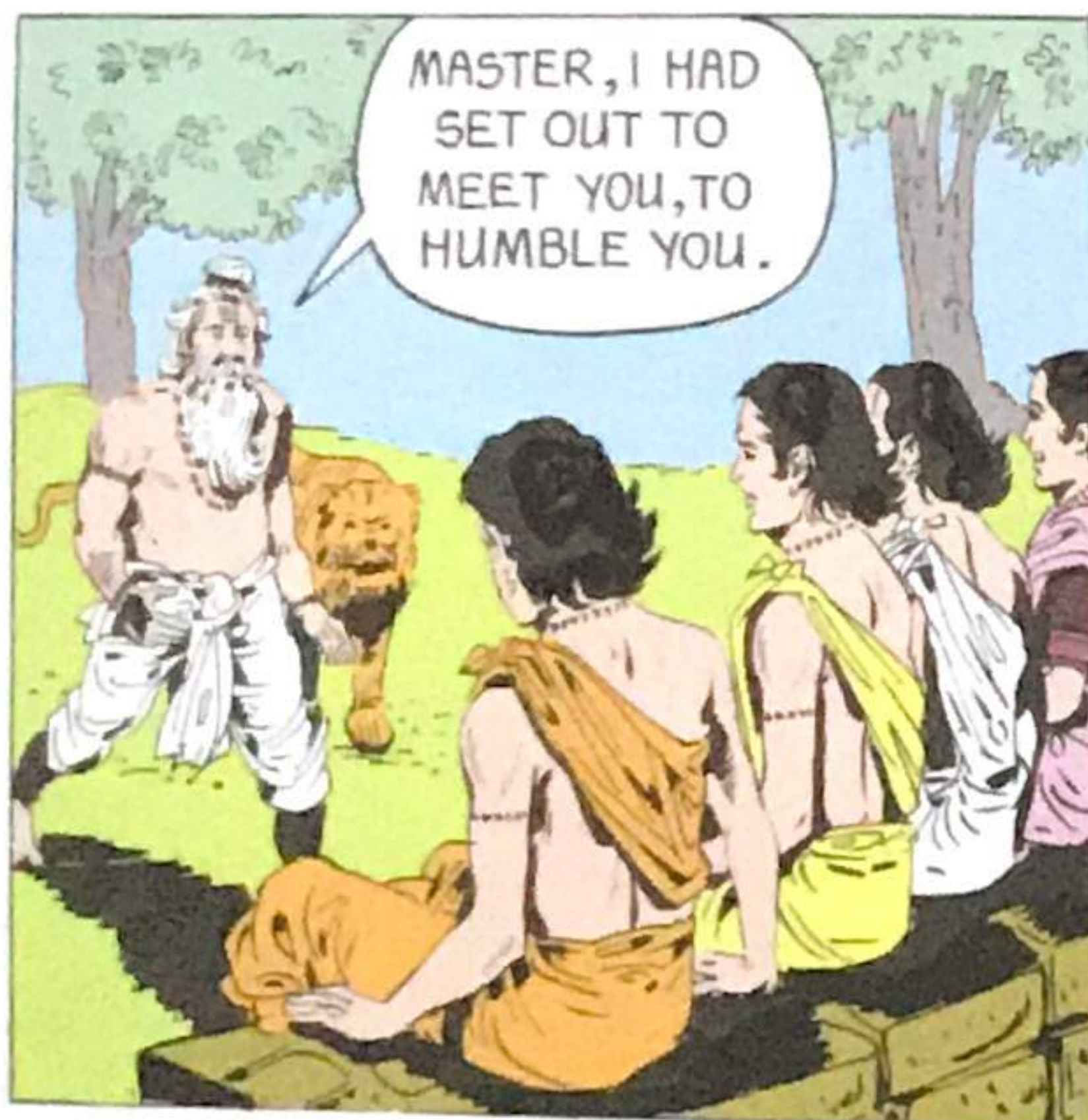
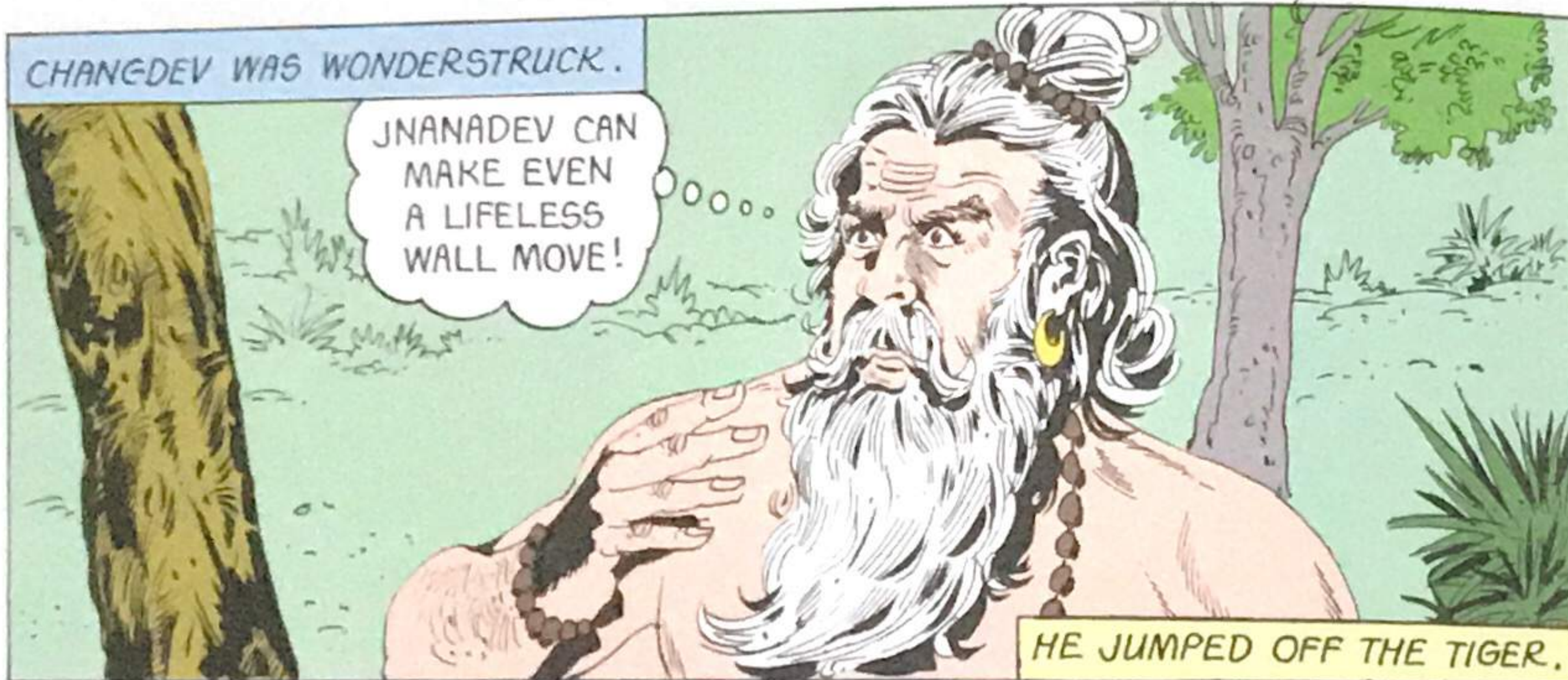
THE NEXT DAY, WHEN VISOBA PAID A VISIT TO THE VILLAGE POTTER'S SHOP, JNANADEV'S SISTER, MUKTA, WAS THERE.



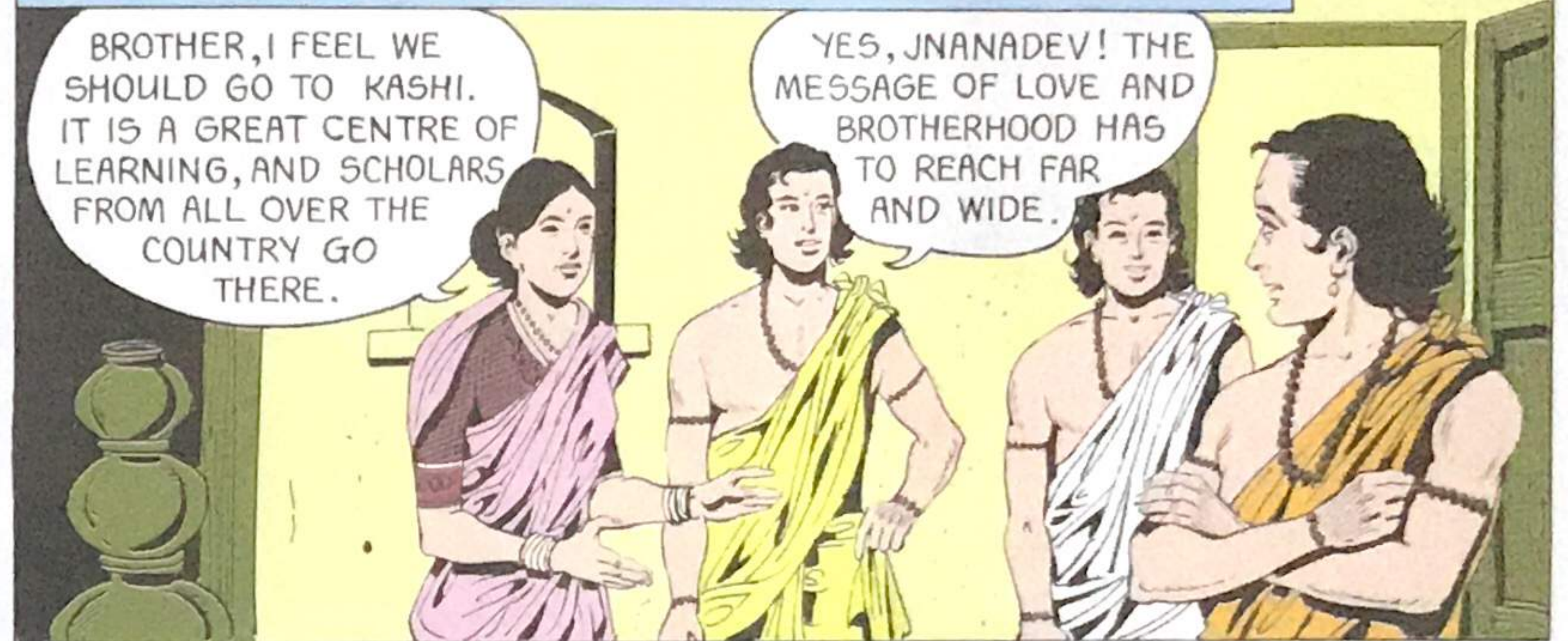
SOON AFTER MUKTA PAID THE MONEY AND TOOK THE PAN—



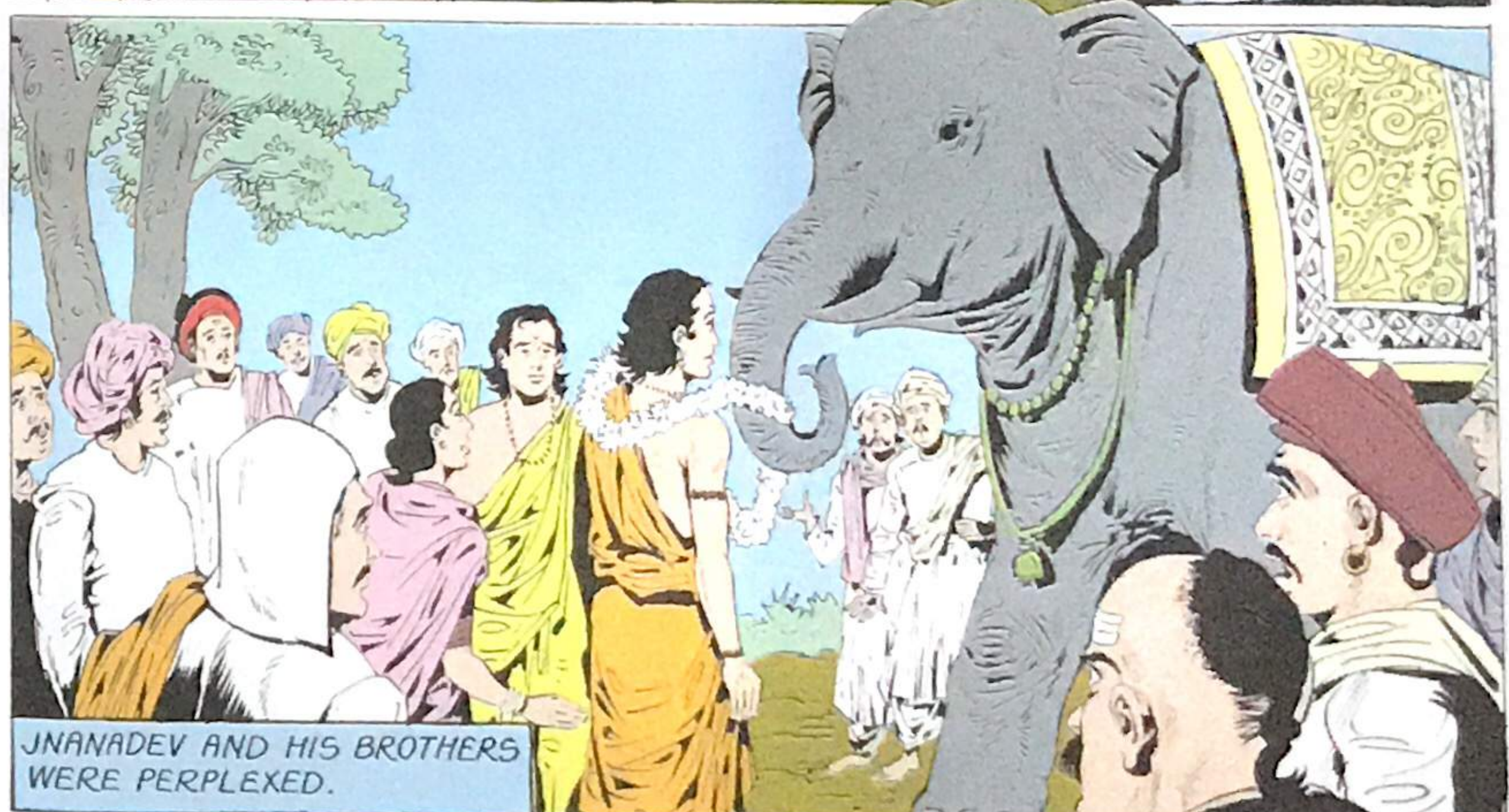
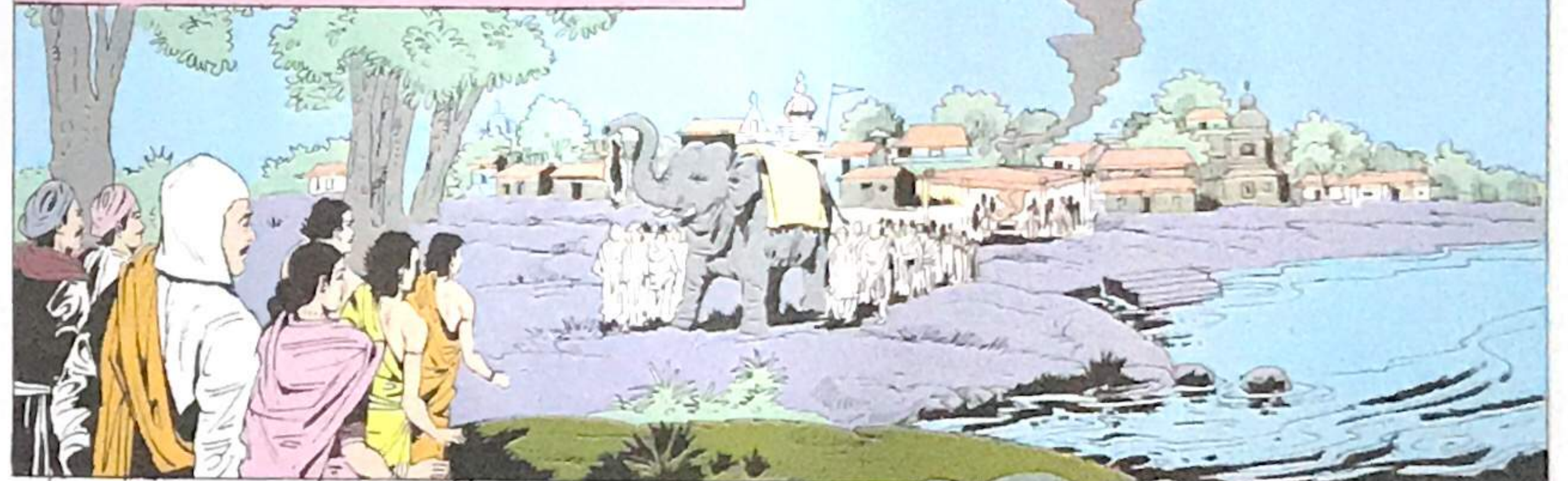


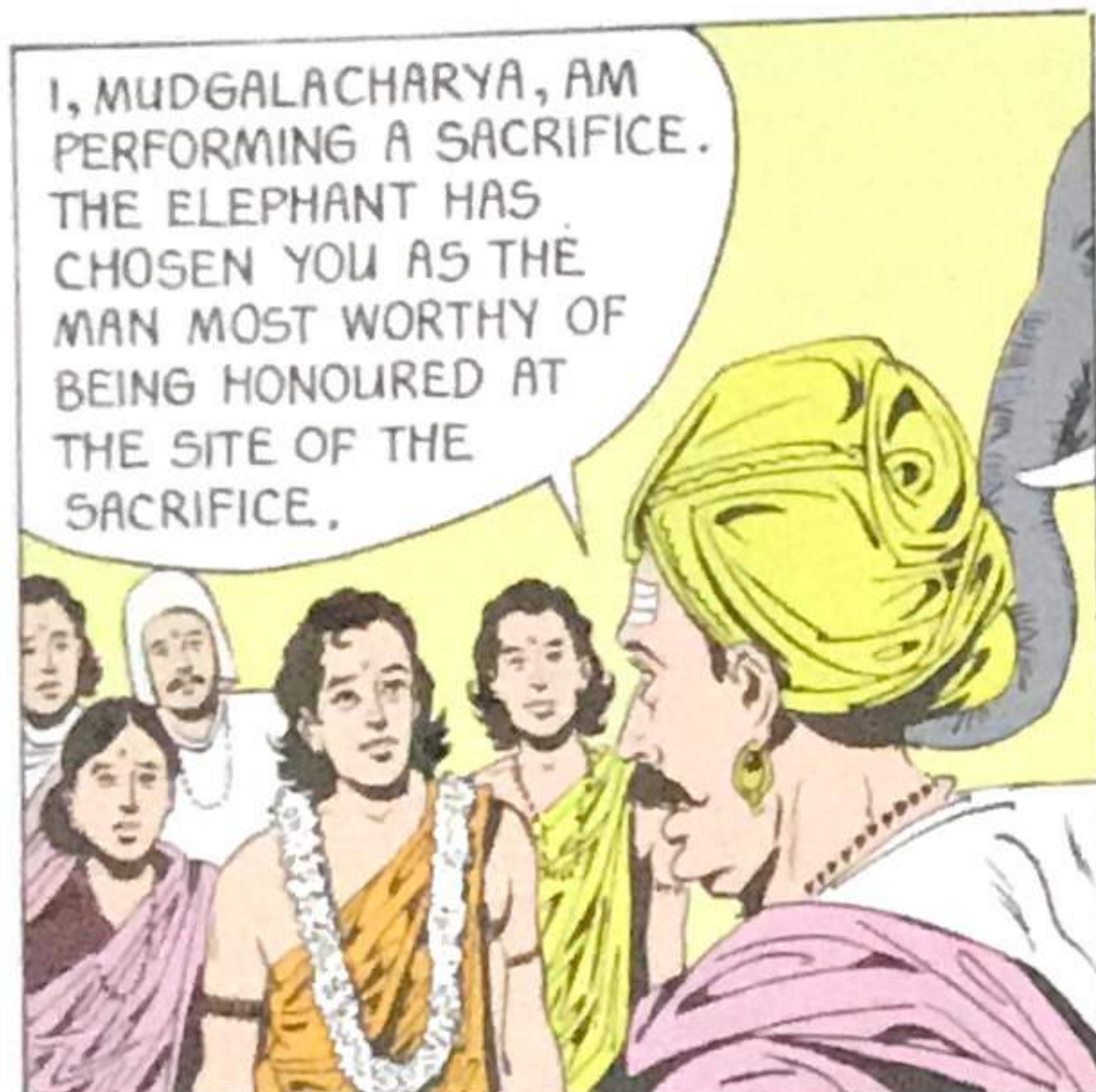


A FEW MONTHS LATER, MUKTA CAME FORWARD WITH A SUGGESTION.

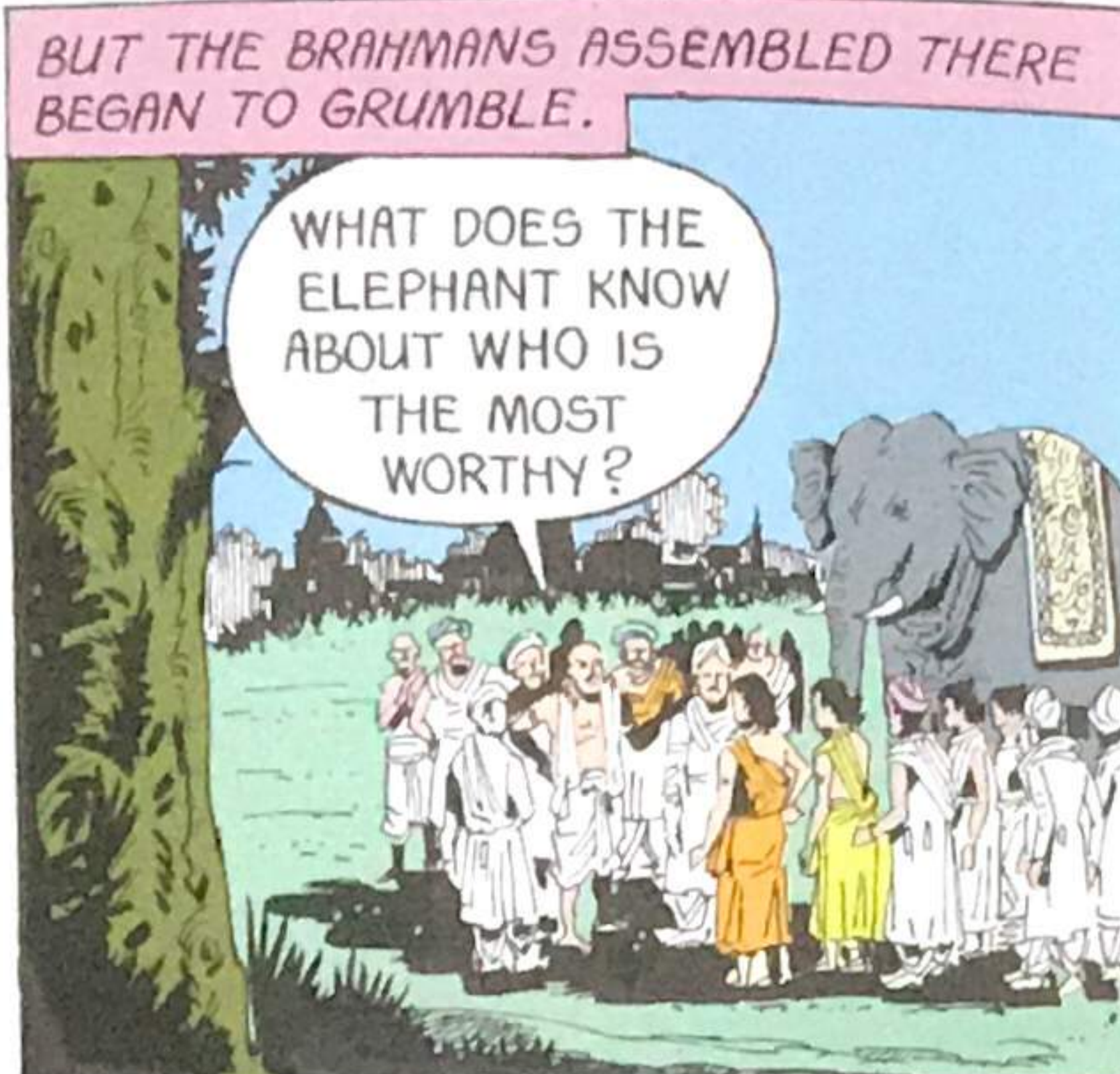


JNANADEV AGREED AND THEY SOON SET OUT. NAMDEV, ANOTHER GREAT SAINT OF THOSE DAYS, ACCOMPANIED THEM. WHEN THEY REACHED KASHI THEY SAW A PROCESSION HEADING TOWARDS THEM.



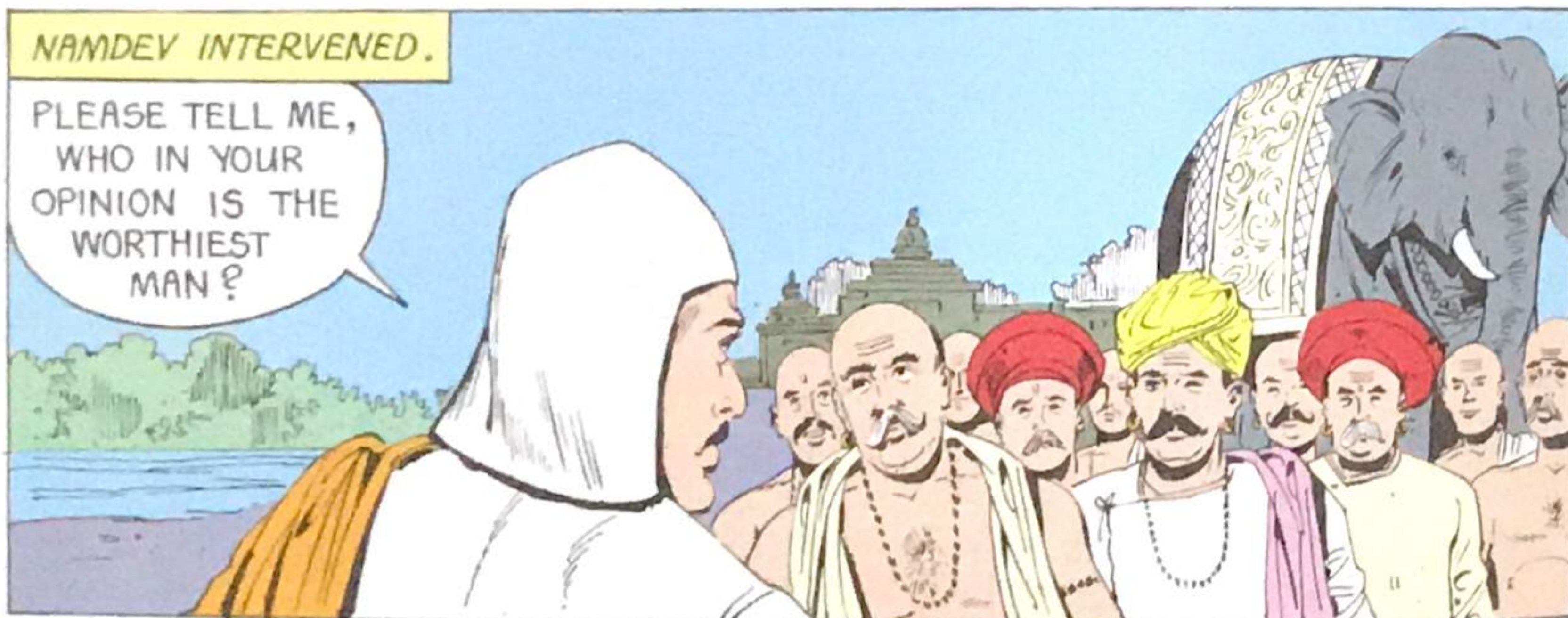


I, MUDGALACHARYA, AM PERFORMING A SACRIFICE. THE ELEPHANT HAS CHOSEN YOU AS THE MAN MOST WORTHY OF BEING HONOURED AT THE SITE OF THE SACRIFICE.



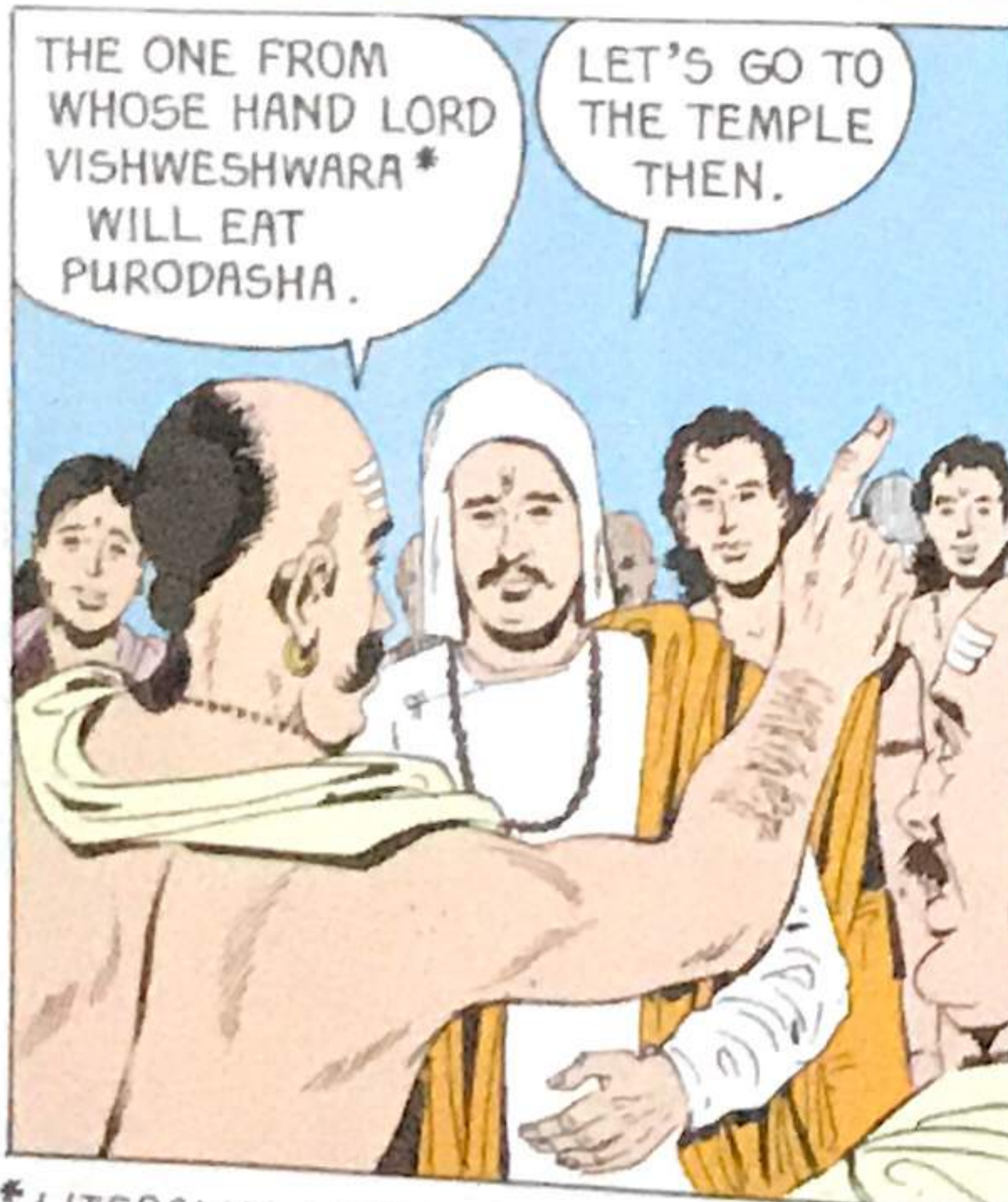
BUT THE BRAHMANS ASSEMBLED THERE BEGAN TO GRUMBLE.

WHAT DOES THE ELEPHANT KNOW ABOUT WHO IS THE MOST WORTHY?



NAMDEV INTERVENED.

PLEASE TELL ME, WHO IN YOUR OPINION IS THE WORTHIEST MAN?



THE ONE FROM WHOSE HAND LORD VISHWESHWARA* WILL EAT PURODASHA.

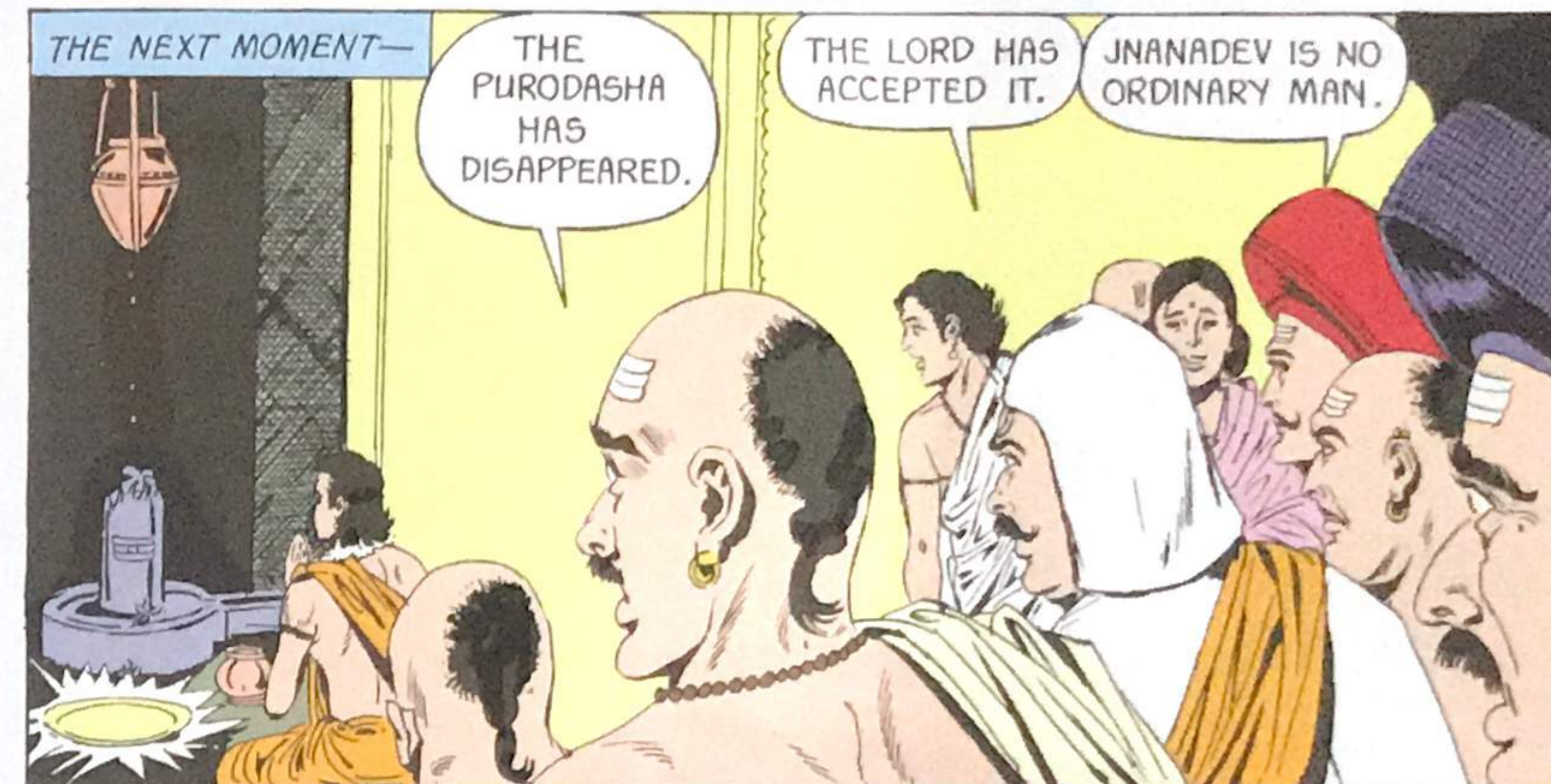
LET'S GO TO THE TEMPLE THEN.



AT THE TEMPLE, JNANADEV PRAYED AND OFFERED PURODASHA TO THE LORD.

LORD, ACCEPT MY HUMBLE OFFERING.

* LITERALLY LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

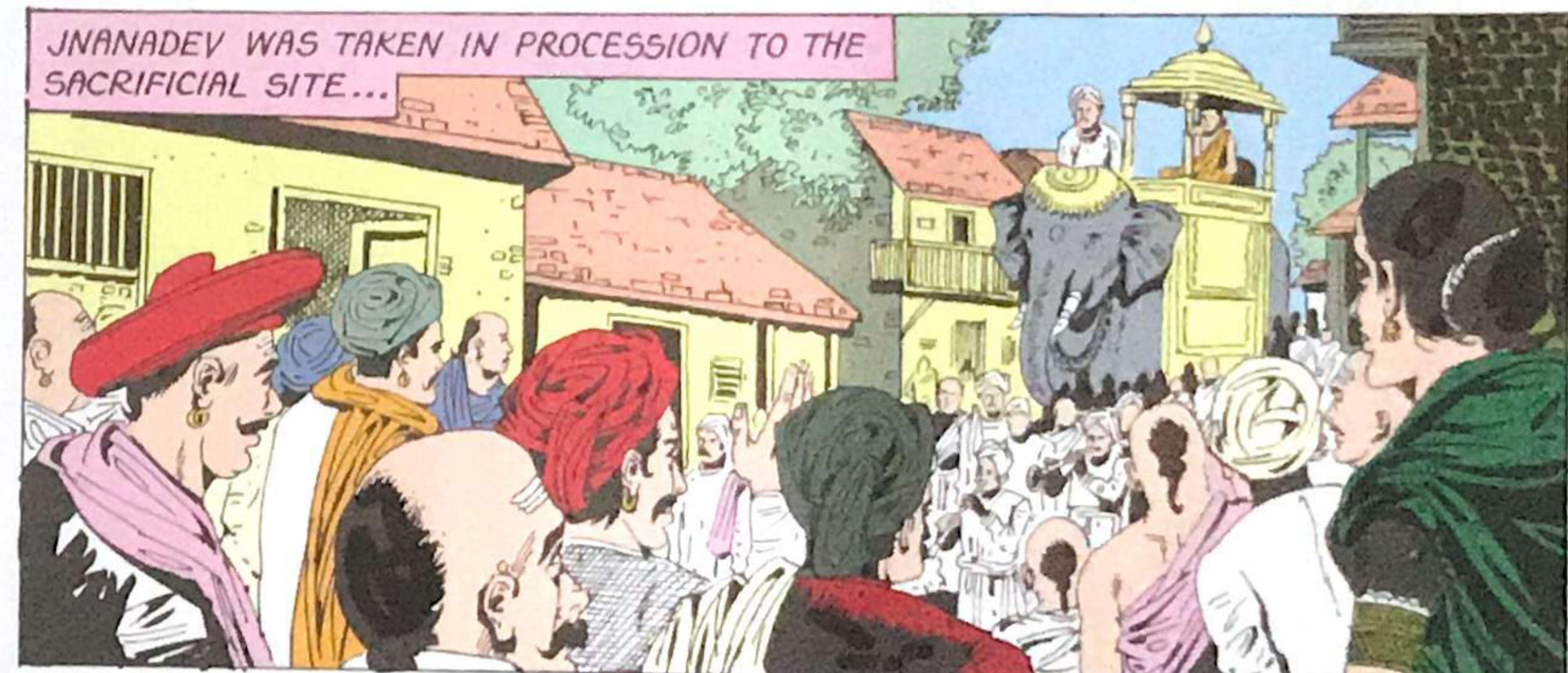


THE NEXT MOMENT—

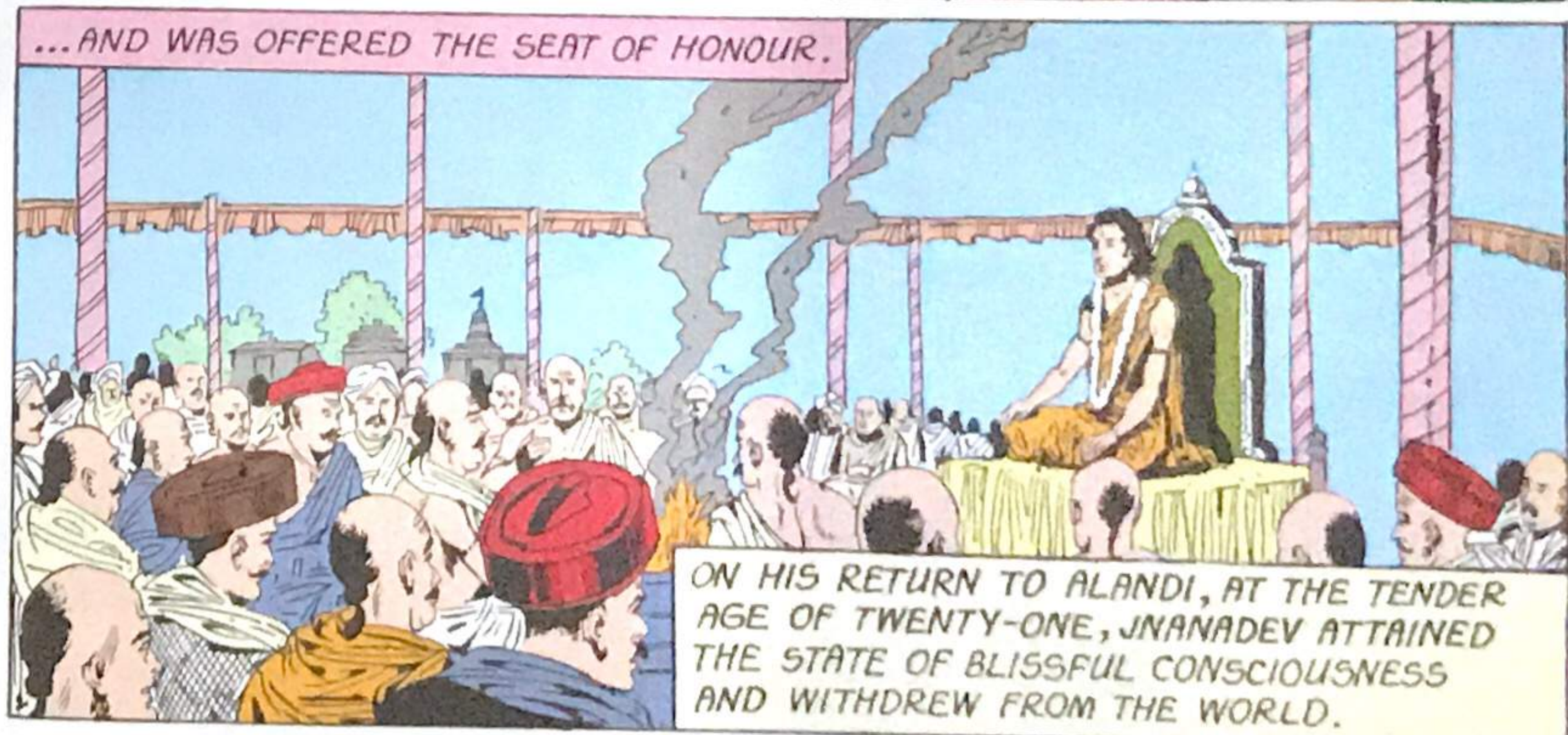
THE PURODASHA HAS DISAPPEARED.

THE LORD HAS ACCEPTED IT.

JNANADEV IS NO ORDINARY MAN.



JNANADEV WAS TAKEN IN PROCESSION TO THE SACRIFICIAL SITE...



... AND WAS OFFERED THE SEAT OF HONOUR.

ON HIS RETURN TO ALANDI, AT THE TENDER AGE OF TWENTY-ONE, JNANADEV ATTAINED THE STATE OF BLISSFUL CONSCIOUSNESS AND WITHDREW FROM THE WORLD.